JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

INDIA REDISCOVERED

Abridged from *The Discovery of India*

by

C. D. NARASIMHAIAH

Professor of English, Maharaja's College, Mysore



Geoffrey Cumberlege

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FOREWORD

WHEN I was in England and America between 1947 and 1950 a number of friends asked me if I could recommend a book which would introduce them to the *real* India. It was not easy, for books on India fell, generally speaking, into two categories: those that contained a downright condemnation of India's other-worldliness and backwardness; and those that indulged in an idealization of India's past. There might be valid reasons for both points of view, but the result was far from fair or satisfactory. While this was the case with a vast majority of works on India, *The Discovery of India* was the one book which I could confidently recommend to scholar and layman alike.

Back at home from Europe and America what pains me most as a teacher is the average Indian student's colossal ignorance of his own country's past. How sad it is when we realize that tradition is the means by which 'the vitality of the past enriches the life of the present'! But unfortunately, left to themselves not many students feel called upon to read books like *The Discovery*, and the only way of making them read such books is to set them as textbooks.

The literary value of the book too has weighed with me in editing it for use as a textbook. *The Discovery* is not merely a chronicle of historical events or a treatise on Indian culture, it is a piece of literature conceived and executed by one who is probably India's greatest writer of English prose.

It is for the benefit of the undergraduate in the University and the average educated reader (in India and abroad), both of whom are pressed for time, though in different ways, that I have abridged the book in such a way as to exclude the sections on political developments and to focus mainly on those chapters which give a cultural background of India.

I am deeply grateful to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and the Signet Press, Calcutta, for kind permission to abridge

the book. Seldom have I changed a word, and I have tried scrupulously to maintain the meaning and force of the original.

C. D. N.

MAIN EVENTS IN JAWAHARLAL NEHRU'S LIFE

Born of prosperous parents, Motilal Nehru and Swarup Rani, Allahabad, 1889. Educated at Harrow, 1905-7 and Cambridge, 1907-10 ; Barrister-at-Law, Inner Temple, London, 1912 ; practised at the Allahabad Bar from 1912. Married Kamala in 1916. Became a member of the Non-violent Non-Cooperation Movement under Gandhi, 1920 ; associated with Allahabad Municipal Labour and National movements ; imprisoned on several occasions for political views.

General Secretary of the All-India Congress Committee, 1923-9 ; succeeded father as President of Congress, 1929 ; President also in 1936, 1937, and 1946. President, All-India States' People's Conference, and Chairman, National Planning Committee, 1939.

Vice-President of the Viceroy's Executive Council (Indian Interim Government) and Minister for External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations, 1946 ; President, Asian Relations Organization since 1947 ; Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs since 1947.

Birth of a daughter (Indira), 1926 ; death of wife, 1936, in Switzerland. Visited Burma and Malaya 1937, Europe 1938, Ceylon and China 1939 ; America 1949 ; England for the Coronation 1953.

Publications : *Soviet Russia 1928* ; *Letters from a Father to his Daughter* 1930 ; *Glimpses of World History* 1934 ; *Autobiography* 1936 ; *India and the World* 1936 ; *The Question of Language* 1937 ; *Eighteen Months in India* 1938 ; *China, Spain and the War* 1940 ; *The Unity of India* 1941 ; *The Discovery of India* 1946 ; *Prison Humours* 1946 ; *Inside America* 1949 ; *Before and After Independence—Speeches* 1950.

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INTRODUCTION

THE Discovery of India is neither history nor romance. Nehru himself says he is no historian : 'I came late to history and, even then, not through the usual direct road of learning a mass of facts and drawing conclusions and inferences from them, unrelated to my life's course.' He lives, and loves to live, in the present, but he is aware that the roots of the present lie in the past. So he made 'voyages of discovery' into the past, ever seeking a clue in it to the understanding of the present. It is in that sense—as an urge to further thought and action —that his *Discovery* has any relevance to us living in the present and building for the future. It is not a picture of the romanticized past of India. No one is so impatient as Nehru with the dead wood of the past that encumbers our lives. All that has served its purpose has to go, says the author. But he is quick to add that this does not mean a break with or forgetting of the vital experiences of the past. Indeed he is so anxious about retaining them that he says, 'If India forgets them she will no longer remain India and much that has made her our joy and pride will cease to be '.[1]

But like most others who want to understand the past Nehru too must have found the prevailing mode of writing on India utterly unsatisfactory. Our history books abound in names, dates, events and dull catalogues of ruling dynasties, of battles lost and won, of the extent of empires, and so on. What they lack is the historic sense. Nehru, it may be truly said, has this sense of history, the past of India in his bones. And his book is an attempt—there has never been a more successful one—to discover the soul of India, her art, music, drama and poetry ; her achievements in trade, industry, commerce, science, religion and philosophy ; and to examine the causes of her greatness, the vitality and staying-power of her culture as well as the deterioration and decay which have crept into her body politic in recent times.

[1] p. 220.

He is aware that he 'would not be writing for today or tomorrow but for an unknown and possibly distant future'.[1] And of his powers to produce a work which neither his contemporaries nor posterity would willingly let die, what better testimony do we want than his own, which is amply confirmed by a careful reading of the book: 'I suppose I have changed a good deal during these twelve years [since the *Autobiography* was written]. I have grown more contemplative. There is perhaps a little more poise and equilibrium, some sense of detachment, a greater calmness of spirit.'[2] *The Discovery* is undoubtedly his masterpiece, being the product of his mature mind. It is at the same time more readable and makes a wider appeal to the general reader in the East as well as the West than any of his previous works. The *Autobiography*, for instance, is not exclusively biographical, and the charm of the narrative is to some extent marred by the number of controversial issues he raises in the course of the book. *Glimpses of World History* is, in the very nature of things—it was written for a girl of 13—rather superficial and largely 'historical'. It is in *The Discovery* that one really witnesses Nehru's versatility—all the gifts of all the muses so rarely fused in one solitary man—his judgement, his genius for interpretation, and his powers for reconstructing past history and making it live before us.

He has travelled widely, read extensively—has taken all knowledge for his province—has thought and suffered heroically. Maybe, he has not always gone to original sources (it is here that the academic historian grumbles although he cannot prove where Nehru is not true to history), but, as Mr K. M. Munshi says, Nehru gives the impression of 'walking from Plutarch's pages'. Of him as of Shakespeare, it may be justly said that he knew more history by reading Plutarch than most of us by reading all the books in the British Museum.

It was given to few historians to point out the absurdity of dividing Indian history into the widely accepted 'Hindu India', 'Moslem India', 'British India'. Nehru

[1] p. 3.
[2] *The Discovery of India* (Signet Press, 1948), p. 8.

thinks it is just as wrong and misleading to talk of a Moslem invasion or a Moslem period in India as to talk of a Christian invasion or to call the British period the Christian period. Again, while most historians, philosophers, poets, intellectuals and non-intellectuals of all countries alike echo the received view that modern Europe and America are children of the Hellenic spirit, Nehru refuses to follow the line of least resistance. He argues boldly and convincingly that there is no 'organic connexion' between Hellenic civilization and modern European and American civilization. 'The modern notion that the really important thing is to be comfortable is entirely foreign to the ideas underlying Greek or any other ancient literature.'[1] Actually it is not modern Europe or America, but India, that is far nearer in spirit and outlook to old Greece.

In the same manner Nehru's interpretative genius leads him to examine the compelling force behind the great mathematical inventions and discoveries of ancient India. He argues that they cannot be the 'momentary illumination of an erratic genius, much in advance of his time, but that they answered some insistent demand of the times. . . . Society had grown complex and large numbers of people were engaged in governmental operations and in an extensive trade. It was impossible to carry on without simple methods of calculation'.[2] If this necessity had not been felt the invention or the discovery would not have come about, and if it had, it would have had to wait for the propitious moment before it could find expression and acceptance.

Although he says that, being an Indian, he is apt to be blind to India's shortcomings, he is not slow to recognize the fallacy inherent in an argument of Radhakrishnan that Indian philosophy lost its vigour with the loss of political freedom. Nehru frankly asks: 'Why should political freedom be lost unless some kind of decay has preceded it?'[3] Similarly he attacks the popular tendency of throwing the blame for all our ills on the invaders—Moslem or British. Scholars thought and the rest liked to believe that Sanskrit drama declined

[1] p. 80. [2] p. 123. [3] p. 129.

after the ninth century owing to lack of royal patronage during the Indo-Afghan and Moghul periods and the Islamic disapproval of drama as an art form. Nehru sees little substance in such an argument. In the first place the decline was obvious long before. But more important, if this drama had any vitality left it could have continued its creative career in the South. Besides, except in regard to actual image-making, the Muslim rulers gave excellent encouragement of Indian music, art and painting. Here is the disinterestedness of a true literary critic; there is no sentimentality, no prejudice.

The same scientific outlook and objectivity are evident when he refuses to consider the Hindu Scriptures as Holy Writ. He would like to 'analyse and criticize' them and consider them as having been written by human beings, very wise and far-seeing, and thus pay homage to the astonishing mind of man which conceived them so long ago. He says that Christian mission work in India has not always been admirable or praiseworthy, but in the matter of giving shape to some undeveloped languages and in the collection of folklore he acknowledges their valuable service. Again, he bitterly resents British Imperialism but praises Britain for sending us the England of Shakespeare and Milton, of political revolution and scientific progress, and still wishes Britain well. Throughout the book he is careful to distinguish the rulers—the bureaucrat, the imperialist and the racialist—from the populace of England, and fixes the responsibility in the proper place.

If he blames the rulers, he deplores no less the complacent attitude of his own countrymen in the eighth and ninth centuries as, for all their contacts with the Arabs, they learnt nothing from them but remained aloof wrapped in their own conceits and keeping as far as possible within their own shells. 'This was unfortunate,' says Nehru, 'for the intellectual ferment of Baghdad and the Arab renaissance movement would have shaken up the Indian mind just when it was losing much of its creative vigour.'[1] This might well be a warning to Indians of the present age, especially to the so-called nationalists, to

[1] p. 133.

abandon their narrow exclusiveness and partake freely of the fruits of other peoples' efforts all the world over, for we are heirs to all that humanity has ever thought and said. Indeed, he shows in successive sections of the book how India has been influenced by her contact with Greece, Arabia, Iran, China and Europe.

We get in *The Discovery* some exquisite pen portraits of personages whom Nehru is eminently qualified to write about. Consider the description of Buddha 'seated on the lotus flower, calm and impassive, above passion and desire, beyond the storm and strife of this world, so far away he seems, out of reach, unattainable. . . . His eyes are closed, but some power of the spirit looks out of them and a vital energy fills the frame'.[1] We not merely feel his greatness, we see him too. For the author succeeds in portraying in words what others have done with stone and clay and paint. We feel we are face to face with the Enlightened One.

How powerfully does Nehru convey the meaning of Gandhi's arrival on the Indian scene! The description is a veritable 'Ode to the West Wind' in prose. He compares him to a powerful current of fresh air, to a beam of light that pierces the darkness, to a whirlwind that upsets many things, but most of all the working of men's minds. How could images other than Nature's own be adequate to describe the miracle wrought by Gandhi?

While Nehru shared the feelings of the rest of India in 'hoping for little from England' under Churchill's leadership, he knows the portrait would be incomplete and that he himself would be uncharitable if he did not perceive the less known but very important aspect of Churchill's personality, and articulate it. He says: 'and yet he was a big man who could take a big step'.[2] Thus Nehru's sense of justice and desire to portray the complete man seldom desert him. Similar pictures of Chanakya, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Shankara, Ramanujam and Tagore and a host of others fill the pageant, and the land of our forefathers becomes peopled with men and women who lived and loved, fought and

[1] p. 63.

[2] *The Discovery of India*, p. 368.

wept, suffered and sacrificed in the service of our common Mother.

Besides portraits he traces the origin of several popular but little-understood names and practices. The word for an 'image' in Persian and Hindustani is *but*, derived from Buddha. For image-worship came to India from ancient Greece via Afghanistan where they made statues of Bodhisattvas followed by images of Buddha himself. It could not be earlier, observes Nehru, for the Vedic religion as well as Buddhism were opposed to it.

He is equally learned when it comes to tracing the history of 'purdah' and 'suttee' or clarifying mistaken notions about 'Yoga'. His extensive reading and wide experience stand him in good stead in drawing lessons from history. He does not treat the decay of Indian civilization as an isolated or inscrutable event which demands unquestioning acceptance, but tries to look for parallels elsewhere and to investigate causes common to the decay of civilizations. Doubtless the effort is rewarding. Why did Rome fall to the invader? Long before this disaster, Rome had been on the verge of collapse from its own internal weakness. Similarly in India life became cut up into compartments where each man's job was fixed and permanent and had little concern with others.

While we commonly throw the blame for the ills of our modern society on industrialism, Nehru perceives the underlying cause and wants to cure the cause not the symptom. He thinks that there has been a divorce from the soil, the good earth, which is bad for the individual and for the race. Is it surprising, he asks, that Nature treats men as 'unwanted step-children'? He advises us to keep in constant communion with Nature.[1]

One of the chief values of *The Discovery* consists in its attempt to give as objective an account of the Indian National Movement as was possible by one who took so intimate a part in it and who guided the movement to its goal.

[1] *The Discovery of India*, p. 471.

The highlights of the movement as pictured by Nehru are :

(i) Its complete freedom from hatred. 'I do not know of any other nationalist movement which has been so free from hatred,' says Nehru.[1] Mr Clement Attlee recently remarked that there are more Britishers (in civil life) in India today than ever before. It is true that Indians don't nurse grievances for long.

(ii) Growth of internationalism side by side with intense nationalism. In Nehru's words, 'No other nationalist movement of a subject country came anywhere near this, and the general tendency in such other countries was to keep clear of international commitments'. The Congress leaders lined up with republican Spain, China, Abyssinia and Czechoslovakia, although by doing so they were likely to antagonize powerful nations like Italy, Germany and Japan. Nehru says that we should be 'spectators of all time and all being' and make the whole world our field of study.[2]

(iii) Insistence on means rather than ends. During the war, after a series of disappointments and frustrations caused by the intransigence of the British Government, the Congress was on the verge of Civil Disobedience. But the air blitz over England produced a powerful impression in India and Civil Disobedience was given up for the time being as the leaders refused to make England's difficulty their opportunity. Gandhi said, and his sincerity can scarcely be doubted, that the bombing of St Paul's Cathedral shocked him as if the Vishwanath temple of Benares had been bombed. The whole attitude reminds one of Wordsworth's feelings on the Extinction of the Venetian Republic :

> Men are we, and must grieve when even the Shade
> Of that which once was great is passed away.

Thus the struggle for freedom was dignified, honourable and based on moral grounds. The leaders showed the way to the masses not by mere precept but, 'as is usual with us, men at the top were chosen first' to go to jail.[3]

Throughout, Nehru is at pains to establish that the Indian National Movement was not a sudden develop-

[1] p. 209. [2] p. 224. [3] p. 212.

ment but a culmination of our entire past history. It has to be viewed as a natural reaction to the affront done to the dignity of a proud people with a glorious culture. It is thus that the inclusion of these sections in *The Discovery* stands justified. They exemplify the three-fold path advocated by the unknown authors of the *Upanishads* which contain the quintessence of Indian philosophy: *Datta, dayadhvam, damyata* (Give, sympathize, control). The leaders' sacrifice, their sympathy for the adversary, and the restraint and detachment that have throughout guided them in their relations with their rulers, are all to be viewed as Indian culture *in action*. What Mahadev Desai said of Nehru's *Autobiography* seems to me to apply with greater force to *The Discovery*: 'Many accounts of our epic struggle have been written but none so noble as this, none so full of profound introspection, none so vivid in its detail.'

Jawaharlal's prose is admirably suited to all these purposes, as will be seen from the following illustrations, although one cannot help saying that Nehru writes as he speaks—and he speaks extempore. That is at once the strength and weakness of his style. The merit is one of transparent sincerity, of intimacy and of animating power; the weakness is that of repetition, illustration and elaboration—all these tolerable, even desirable, in speech, but somewhat jarring in a printed work.

It is not mere lip service that he pays to the suffering masses. He is evidently moved to pity, yet there is no condescension, no messianic complex about him when he speaks of their lot: 'There are innumerable pictures of the mass—Indian men and women and children all crowded together, looking up at me and I trying to fathom what lies behind those thousands of eyes.'[1]

He speaks of the death of his wife in the tenderest terms: 'Within a few minutes that fair body and that lovely face, which used to smile so often and so well, were reduced to ashes.'[2] In the hands of an inferior artist this might have degenerated into shoddy sentimentality, but in Nehru's hands, as in Goldsmith's, 'melting sentiment is held in check by the precision of

[1] *The Discovery of India*, p. 20. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

language'. How effectively does he contrast life's irrepressible energy, freedom and vitality with the nothingness that Death reduces life to : 'A small urn contained the mortal remains of one who had been so vital, so bright and so full of life.'[1] The wistfulness and pathos of the situation make for words that are Biblical in their simplicity.

If, as Ezra Pound says, in poetry it is not metre that matters but the musical phrase is everything, the following sentence is unquestionably poetic : 'A vigorous Jat, wedded to the soil from immemorial generations.'[2] Not merely is it musical, but it is highly suggestive. It suggests rustic vitality, the peasant's unflinching devotion to Mother Earth, an unbroken continuity through the ages, a sense of far away and long ago.

When Nehru says : 'The centuries-old ideas continued, phantoms floating about the upper layer of their consciousness and fading away into the landscape they had fashioned for themselves',[3] the airiness and the unsubstantial nature of these ideas could hardly have found a more befitting expression.

From this dry sarcasm to open indignation, there is but a short step when he chastises his countrymen for wrapping themselves up in their own conceits without profiting from the intellectual ferment of Baghdad and the Arab renaissance movement.

He can summarize a mass of information in a clear, concise style which is none the less vivid and arresting. He surveys events with a vision and perspective of which few modern historians are capable and expresses them with inimitable simplicity. 'England came to India. When Queen Elizabeth gave a charter to the East India Company in 1600, Shakespeare was alive and writing. In 1611 the Authorized English edition of the Bible was issued; in 1608 Milton was born. There followed Hampden and Cromwell and the political revolution. In 1660 the Royal Society of England, which was to advance the cause of science so much, was organized. A hundred years later, in 1760, the flying shuttle was invented, and there followed in quick suc-

[1] *The Discovery of India*, p. 27. [2] p. 16. [3] p. 80.

cession the spinning jenny, the steam-engine and the power loom. Which of these two Englands came to India ? '[1]

But he is not a cold-blooded intellectual. He has a delicate feeling for Nature, which is far from mere anaemic aestheticism. To Nehru Nature's varied moods are symbolic of the changes that man witnesses in the human world. Indeed, he seems to think that the same law is operating in both Nature and man: 'The moon is a reminder of the loveliness of this world, of the waxing and waning of life, of light following darkness, of death and resurrection, following each other in interminable succession.'

Joy and sorrow constitute the pattern of life in Nature as well as in man. This is what the ancient scriptures taught us. In his attitude to life, in his fearlessness, noble pride, love of adventure—physical, mental and spiritual—in the ideal of service above self and love of humanity, Nehru seems to be the authentic symbol of the dynamic life of ancient India—an India which tried to explore uncharted seas, colonize distant lands, calculate astronomical distances and unravel Nature's mysteries in the eternal quest after truth.

What strikes one throughout *The Discovery* is the complete absence of inexplicable prejudices and mystical beliefs on the part of its author. He bears the stamp of utter intellectual integrity. In Gandhi we can often see the wisdom of the deed but we may not see the logic of his thought. Not so with Nehru. His weapons are logic and common sense. As M. N. Roy once explained, Nehru gives 'his most impulsive actions a rational background'. Indeed Jawaharlal the patriot, the mass leader, does not interest the intellectuals of Europe and America very much. What interests them is the Nehru who has so vigorously defended his convictions and faith (as in the *Autobiography*), the scholar-statesman who has surveyed the world as a humanist, and the architect of the world of tomorrow (as in *Glimpses of World History*), the patriot who has revindicated the

[1] pp. 174-5.

glory of this great land and its ancient culture, not in blind veneration but in a spirit of detachment that appeals to the Western world. By so doing he has rendered a signal service to India and to the world. Radhakrishnan's exposition of Indian philosophy and religion may be read by the philosophers of the West; Ananda Coomaraswamy's interpretation of Indian art may be read by students of art in America; and there may be diverse writings of political thinkers, historians, and pamphleteers which are read and admired by the interested everywhere. But none of them have given a panorama of India's past with such scientific objectivity (Nehru says he looked at India as a friendly foreigner does), and with a literary charm that appeals to the general reader no less than to the scholar; none have analysed the causes of our decay and deterioration with such candour; or written about the staying-power of that old culture as manifested in our fight for independence—the ideals that guided us and the light that stood by us continually. His language is modern but his spirit is 'tuned to perennial humanity'.

Mr Humayun Kabir rightly remarked that 'it is evidence of the strength of his nature as an artist that continuous political life for over two[1] decades has not blunted his finer perceptions. The artist triumphs over the politician. That explains why he is perhaps the most loved of all Indian politicians'. Even his occasional statements show a love of the arts and a sense of rhythm. How freely he indulges his taste for poetic quotation, literary allusion, and the like! He would be a poor reader indeed who fails to discover them in his writing. The chapter headings of the book give a convincing clue to his poetic being: 'The Panorama of India's Past', '*Bhārat Mātā*', 'The Chain of Happening'.[2] Basil Mathews, to whom *Glimpses* is inscribed, wonders whether some day Nehru's niche in the world's temple of immortality will be carved by his pen rather than by his statecraft. For although he speaks of India essentially he lifts every subject into

[1] Now three, but still true.
[2] Section 1 of Chapter X in the complete book.

the world perspective. John Gunther, a journalist of world renown, thinks that Nehru 'speaks and writes English in a style which hardly a dozen men alive can match'.

It is, of course, foolish to argue on these accounts that a great writer is lost to literature by Nehru's devotion to politics. Nehru himself says that he is intensely interested in the adventures of the mind as they influence human action and promote human happiness. And it is largely because of his interest in both ideas and action that we have not only a great statesman but a distinguished man of letters.

The University, C. D. N.
Mysore, July 1953.

INDIA REDISCOVERED

I : AHMADNAGAR FORT

IT is more than twenty months since we were brought here, more than twenty months of my ninth term of imprisonment. The twenty-first is well on its way; the moon waxes and wanes and soon two years will have been completed. Another birthday will come round to remind me that I am getting older; my last four birthdays I have spent in prison, here and in Dehra Dun Jail, and many others in the course of my previous terms of imprisonment. I have lost count of their number.

During all these months I have often thought of writing, felt the urge to it and at the same time a reluctance. My friends took it for granted that I would write and produce another book, as I had done during previous terms of imprisonment. It had almost become a habit.

Yet I did not write. There was a certain distaste for just throwing out a book which had no particular significance. It was easy enough to write, but to write something that was worthwhile was another matter, something that would not grow stale while I sat in prison with my manuscript and the world went on changing. I would not be writing for today or tomorrow but for an unknown and possibly distant future. For whom would I write and for when? It was a risky adventure to write now for a future date, when the problems of today might be dead and buried and new problems had taken their place.

All these thoughts troubled and restrained me, and behind them lay deeper questions in the recesses of my mind to which I could find no easy answer.

Similar thoughts and difficulties came to me during my last term of imprisonment, from October 1940 to December 1941, mostly spent in my old cell of Dehra Dun Jail, where six years earlier I had begun writing my autobiography. For ten months there I could not develop the mood for writing, and I spent my time in

reading or in digging and playing about with soil and flowers.

As in Dehra Dun Jail, here also I took to gardening and spent many hours daily, even when the sun was hot, in digging and preparing beds for flowers. The soil was very bad, stony, full of debris and remains of previous building operations, and even the ruins of ancient monuments. For this is a place of history, of many a battle and palace intrigue in the past. That history is not very old, as Indian history goes, nor is it very important in the larger scheme of things. But one incident stands out and is still remembered : the courage of a beautiful woman, Chand Bibi, who defended this fort and led her forces, sword in hand, against the imperial armies of Akbar. She was murdered by one of her own men.

Digging in this unfortunate soil, we have come across parts of ancient walls and the tops of domes of buildings buried far underneath the surface of the ground. Once we came across a lovely lotus carved in stone on the side of a wall, probably over a doorway.

Now I have put away my spade and taken to the pen instead. Possibly what I write now will meet the same fate as my unfinished manuscript of Dehra Dun Jail. I cannot write about the present so long as I am not free to experience it through action. Nor can I assume the role of a prophet and write about the future. The past remains ; but I cannot write academically of past events in the manner of an historian or scholar. I have not that knowledge or equipment or training ; nor do I possess the mood for that kind of work. The past oppresses me or fills me sometimes with its warmth when it touches on the present, and becomes, as it were, an aspect of that living present. If it does not do so, then it is cold, barren, lifeless, uninteresting. I can only write about it, as I have previously done, by bringing it into some relation to my present-day thoughts and activities.

The burden of the past, the burden of both good and ill, is overpowering, and sometimes suffocating, more especially for those of us who belong to very ancient civilizations like those of India and China. As Nietzsche

says: 'Not only the wisdom of centuries—also their madness breaketh out in us. Dangerous is it to be an heir.'

What is my inheritance? To what am I an heir? To all that humanity has achieved during tens of thousands of years, to all that it has thought and felt and suffered and taken pleasure in, to its cries of triumph and its bitter agony of defeat, to that astonishing adventure of man which began so long ago and yet continues and beckons to us. To all this and more, in common with all men. But there is a special heritage for those of us of India, not an exclusive one, for none is exclusive and all are common to the race of man, yet one more especially applicable to us, something that is in our flesh and blood and bones, that has gone to make us what we are and what we are likely to be.

It is the thought of this particular heritage and its application to the present that has long filled my mind, and it is about this that I should like to write, though the difficulty and complexity of the subject appal me and I can only touch the surface of it.

II : THE QUEST

1 : *The Panorama of India's Past*

DURING these years of thought and activity my mind has been full of India, trying to understand her and analyse my own reactions towards her. I went back to my childhood days and tried to remember what I felt like then, what vague shape this conception took in my growing mind and how it was moulded by fresh experience.

I constantly asked myself: what is this India, apart from her physical and geographical aspects? What did she represent in the past? What gave strength to her then? How did she lose that old strength? And has she lost it completely? Does she represent anything vital now, apart from being the home of a vast number of human beings? How does she fit into the modern world?

The future that took shape in my mind was one of intimate co-operation, politically, economically, culturally, between India and other countries of the world. But before the future came, there was the present, and behind the present lay the long and tangled past, out of which the present had grown. So to the past I looked for understanding.

India was in my blood and there was much in her that instinctively thrilled me. And yet I approached her almost as an alien critic, full of dislike for the present as well as for many of the relics of the past that I saw. To some extent I came to her via the West and looked at her as a friendly westerner might have done. I was eager and anxious to change her outlook and appearance and give her the garb of modernity. And yet doubts rose within me. Did I know India?—I who presumed to scrap much of her past heritage? There was a great deal that had to be scrapped, but surely India could not have been what she undoubtedly was, and could not have continued a cultured existence for thousands of

years, if she had not possessed something very vital and worthwhile. What was this something ?

I stood on a mound of Mohenjo-daro in the Indus Valley in the north-west of India, and all around me lay the houses and streets of this ancient city that is said to have existed over five thousand years ago ; and even then it was an old and well-developed civilization. 'The Indus civilization', writes Professor Childe, 'represents a very perfect adjustment of human life to a specific environment that can only have resulted from years of patient effort. And it has endured ; it is already specifically Indian and forms the basis of modern Indian culture.' Astonishing thought : that any culture or civilization should have this continuity for five or six thousand years or more ; and not in a static, unchanging sense, for India was changing and progressing all the time. She was coming into intimate contact with the Persians, the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Chinese, the Arabs, the Central Asians, and the peoples of the Mediterranean. But though she influenced them and was influenced by them, her cultural basis was strong enough to endure. What was the secret of this strength ? Where did it come from ?

I read her history and read also a part of her abundant ancient literature and was powerfully impressed by the vigour of the thought, the clarity of the language and the richness of the mind that lay behind it. I journeyed through India in the company of mighty travellers from China and western and central Asia who came here in the remote past and left records of their travels. I thought of what India had accomplished in eastern Asia, in Angkor, Borobudur and many other places. I wandered over the Himalayas, which are closely connected with old myth and legend and which have so much influenced our thought and literature. My love of the mountains and my kinship with Kashmir especially drew me to them, and I saw there not only the life and vigour and beauty of the present but also the memoried loveliness of ages past. The mighty rivers of India that flow from this great mountain barrier into the plains of India attracted me and reminded me of innumerable phases of our history. The Indus or

Sindhu, from which our country came to be called India and Hindustan, and across which races and tribes and caravans and armies have come for thousands of years; the Brahmaputra, rather cut off from the main current of history but living in old story; the Jumna, round which cluster so many legends of dance and fun and play; and the Ganga, above all the river of India, which has held India's heart captive and has drawn uncounted millions to her banks since the dawn of history. The story of the Ganga, from her source to the sea, from old times to new, is the story of India's civilization and culture, of the rise and fall of empires, of great and proud cities, of the adventure of man and the quest of the mind which has so occupied India's thinkers, of the richness and fulfilment of life as well as its denial and renunciation, of ups and downs, and growth and decay, of life and death.

I visited old monuments and ruins and ancient sculptures and frescoes—Ajanta, Ellora, the Elephanta Caves and other places—and I also saw the lovely buildings of a later age in Agra and Delhi where every stone told its story of India's past.

In my own city of Allahabad or in Hardwar I would go to the great bathing festivals, the *Kumbh Mela*, and see hundreds of thousands of people come, as their forebears had come for thousands of years from all over India, to bathe in the Ganga. I would remember descriptions of these festivals written thirteen hundred years ago by Chinese pilgrims and others, and even then these *melas* were ancient and lost in an unknown antiquity. What was the tremendous faith, I wondered, that had drawn our people for untold generations to this famous river of India?

These journeys and visits of mine, with the background of my reading, gave me an insight into the past. To a somewhat bare intellectual understanding was added an emotional appreciation, and gradually a sense of reality began to creep into my mental picture of India, and the land of my forefathers became peopled with living beings, who laughed and wept, loved and suffered; and among them were men who seemed to know life and understand it, and out of their wisdom

they had built a structure which gave India a cultural stability which lasted for thousands of years. Hundreds of vivid pictures of this past filled my mind, and they would stand out as soon as I visited a particular place associated with them. At Sarnath, near Benares, I would almost see the Buddha preaching his first sermon, and some of his recorded words would come like a distant echo to me through two thousand five hundred years. Ashoka's pillars of stone with their inscriptions would speak to me in their magnificent language and tell me of a man who, though an emperor, was greater than any king or emperor. At Fatehpur Sikri, Akbar, forgetful of his empire, was seated holding converse and debate with the learned of all faiths, curious to learn something new and seeking an answer to the eternal problem of man.

Thus slowly the long panorama of India's history unfolded itself before me, with its ups and downs, its triumphs and defeats. There seemed to me something unique about the continuity of a cultural tradition through five thousand years of history, of invasion and upheaval, a tradition which was widespread among the masses and powerfully influenced them. Only China has had such a continuity of tradition and cultural life. And this panorama of the past gradually merged into the unhappy present, when India, for all her past greatness and stability, often filled me with a sense of shame, for I was ashamed of much that I saw around me, of superstitious practices, of outworn ideas and above all, our dependent and poverty-stricken state.

2 : *India's Strength and Weakness*

The search for the sources of India's strength and of her deterioration and decay is long and intricate. Yet the recent causes of that decay are obvious enough. She fell behind in the march of technique, and Europe, which had long been backward in many matters, took the lead in technical progress. Behind this technical progress was the spirit of science and a bubbling life and spirit which displayed itself in many activities and in

adventurous voyages of discovery. New techniques gave military strength to the countries of western Europe and it was easy for them to spread out and dominate the East. That is the story not of India only but of almost the whole of Asia.

Why this should have happened is more difficult to unravel, for India was not lacking in mental alertness and technical skill in earlier times. One senses a progressive deterioration during centuries. The urge to life and endeavour becomes less, the creative spirit fades away and gives place to the imitative. Where triumphant and rebellious thought had tried to pierce the mysteries of nature and the universe, the wordy commentator comes with his glosses and long explanations. Magnificent art and sculpture give way to a meticulous carving of intricate detail without nobility of conception or design. The vigour and richness of language, powerful yet simple, are followed by highly ornate and complex literary forms. The urge to adventure and the overflowing life which led to vast schemes of distant colonization and the transplantation of Indian culture in far lands, all these fade away and a narrow orthodoxy taboos even the crossing of the high seas. A rational spirit of inquiry, so evident in earlier times, which might well have led to the further growth of science, is replaced by irrationalism and a blind idolatry of the past. Indian life becomes a sluggish stream, living in the past, moving slowly through the accumulations of dead centuries. The heavy burden of the past crushes it and a kind of coma seizes it. It is not surprising that in this condition of mental stupor and physical weariness India should have deteriorated and remained rigid and immobile while other parts of the world marched ahead.

Yet this is not a complete or wholly correct survey. If there had only been a long and unrelieved period of rigidity and stagnation, this might well have resulted in a complete break with the past, the death of an era, and the erection of something new on its ruins. There has not been such a break and there is a definite continuity. Also from time to time vivid flashes of renascence have occurred, and some of them have been long and brilliant.

Always there is visible an attempt to understand and adapt the new and harmonize it with the old, or at any rate with parts of the old which were considered worth preserving. Often that old retains an external form only, as a kind of symbol, and changes its inner content. But something vital and living continued, some urge driving the people in a direction not wholly realized, always a desire for synthesis between the old and the new. It was this urge and desire that kept them going and enabled them to absorb new ideas while retaining much of the old. Whether there was such a thing as an Indian dream through the ages, vivid and full of life or sometimes reduced to the murmurings of troubled sleep, I do not know. Every people and every nation has some such belief or myth of national destiny and perhaps it is partly true in each case. Being an Indian I am myself influenced by this reality or myth about India, and I feel that anything that had the power to mould hundreds of generations, without a break, must have drawn its enduring vitality from some deep well of strength, and have had the capacity to renew that vitality from age to age.

Was there some such well of strength? And if so, did it dry up, or did it have hidden springs to replenish it? What of today? Are there any springs still functioning from which we can refresh and strengthen ourselves? We are an old race, or rather an odd mixture of many races, and our racial memories go back to the dawn of history. Have we had our day, and are we now living in the late afternoon or evening of our existence, just carrying on after the manner of the aged; quiescent, devitalized, uncreative, desiring peace and sleep above all else?

No people, no race continues unchanged. Continually it is mixing with others and slowly changing; it may appear to die almost and then rise again as a new people or just a variation of the old. There may be a definite break between the old people and the new, or vital links of thought and ideals may join them.

History has numerous instances of old and well-established civilizations fading away or being ended suddenly, and vigorous new cultures taking their place.

Is it some vital energy, some inner source of strength that gives life to a civilization or a people, and without which all effort is ineffective, like the vain attempt of an aged person to play the part of a youth ?

Among the peoples of the world today I have sensed this vital energy chiefly in three—Americans, Russians and the Chinese, a queer combination ! Americans, in spite of having their roots in the old world, are a new people, uninhibited and without the burdens and complexes of old races, and it is easy to understand their abounding vitality. So also are the Canadians, Australians and New Zealanders, all of them largely cut off from the old world and facing life in all its newness.

Russians are not a new people, and yet there has been a complete break from the old, like that of death, and they have been reincarnated anew, in a manner for which there is no example in history. They have become youthful again with an energy and vitality that are amazing. They are searching for some of their old roots again, but for all practical purposes they are a new people, a new race and a new civilization.

The Russian example shows how a people can revitalize itself, become youthful again, if it is prepared to pay the price for it, and tap the springs of suppressed strength and energy among the masses.

The Chinese stand apart from all these. They are not a new race, nor have they gone through that shock of change, from top to bottom, which came to Russia. Undoubtedly seven years of cruel war has changed them, as it must. How far it is due to this war or to more abiding causes I do not know, or whether it is a mixture of the two, but the vitality of the Chinese people astonishes me. I cannot imagine a people endowed with such bed-rock strength going under.

Something of that vitality which I saw in China, I have sensed at times in the Indian people also. Not always, and anyway it is difficult for me to take an objective view. Perhaps my wishes distort my thinking. But always I was in search for this in my wanderings among the Indian people. If they had this vitality, then it was well with them and they would make good. If they lacked it completely then our political efforts and

shouting were all make-believe and would not carry us far. I was not interested in making some political arrangement which would enable our people to carry on more or less as before, only a little better. I felt they had vast stores of suppressed energy and ability and I wanted to release these and make them feel young and vital again. India, constituted as she is, cannot play a secondary part in the world. She will either count for a great deal or not count at all. No middle position attracted me. Nor did I think any intermediate position feasible.

3 : The Search for India

Though books and old monuments and past cultural achievements helped to produce some understanding of India, they did not satisfy me or give me the answer I was looking for. Nor could they, for they dealt with a past age, and I wanted to know if there was any real connexion between that past and the present. The present for me, and for many others like me, was an odd mixture of medievalism, appalling poverty and misery and a somewhat superficial modernism of the middle classes. I was not an admirer of my own class or kind, and yet inevitably I looked to it for leadership in the struggle for India's salvation. That middle class felt caged and circumscribed under the British rule and wanted to grow and develop itself. But it was too much the product of that structure to challenge it and seek to uproot it.

New forces arose that drove us to the masses in the villages, and, for the first time, a new and different India rose up before the young intellectuals who had almost forgotten its existence or attached little importance to it. It was a disturbing sight, not only because of its stark misery and the magnitude of its problems, but because it began to upset some of our values and conclusions. So began for us the discovery of India as it was, and it produced both understanding and conflict within us. Our reactions varied and depended on our previous environment and experience. Some were

already sufficiently acquainted with these village masses not to experience any new sensation; they took them for granted. But for me it was a real voyage of discovery, and while I was always painfully conscious of the failings and weaknesses of my people, I found in India's countryfolk something, difficult to define, which attracted me. That something I had missed in our middle classes.

I do not idealize the conception of the masses and, as far as possible, I try to avoid thinking of them as a theoretical abstraction. The people of India are very real to me in their great variety and, in spite of their vast numbers, I try to think of them as individuals rather than as vague groups. Perhaps it was because I did not expect much from them that I was not disappointed; I found more than I had expected. It struck me that perhaps the reason for this, and for a certain stability and potential strength that they possessed, was the old Indian cultural tradition which was still retained by them in a small measure. Much had gone in the battering they had received during the past two hundred years. Yet something remained that was worthwhile, and with it so much that was worthless and evil.

During the twenties and the thirties, in the intervals of my life out of prison, and especially during the election campaign of 1936-7, I travelled extensively throughout India, in towns and cities and villages alike. Except for rural Bengal, which unhappily I have only rarely visited, I toured in every province and went deep into the villages. I spoke of political and economic issues and judging from my speech I was full of politics and elections. But all this while, in a corner of my mind, lay something deeper and more vivid, and elections meant little to it, or the other excitements of the passing day. Another and a major excitement had seized me, and I was again on a great voyage of discovery, and the land of India and the people of India lay spread out before me. India with all her infinite charm and variety began to grow upon me more and more, and yet the more I saw of her, the more I realized how very difficult it was for me or for anyone else to grasp the

ideas she had embodied. It was not her wide spaces that eluded me, or even her diversity, but some depth of soul which I could not fathom, though I had occasional and tantalizing glimpses of it. She was like some ancient palimpsest on which layer upon layer of thought and reverie had been inscribed, and yet no succeeding layer had completely hidden or erased what had been written previously. All of these exist together in our conscious or subconscious selves, though we may not be aware of them, and they had gone to build up the complex and mysterious personality of India. That sphinx-like face with its elusive and sometimes mocking smile was to be seen throughout the length and breadth of the land. Though outwardly there was diversity and infinite variety among our people, everywhere there was that tremendous impress of oneness, which had held all of us together for ages past, whatever political fate or misfortune had befallen us. The unity of India was no longer merely an intellectual conception for me: it was an emotional experience which overpowered me.

It was absurd, of course, to think of India or any country as a kind of anthropomorphic entity. I did not do so. I was also fully aware of the diversities and divisions of Indian life, of classes, castes, religions, races, different degrees of cultural development. Yet I think that a country with a long cultural background and a common outlook on life develops a spirit that is peculiar to it and that is impressed on all its children, however much they may differ among themselves. Can anyone fail to see this in China, whether he meets an old-fashioned mandarin or a Communist who has apparently broken with the past? It was this spirit of India that I was after, not through idle curiosity, though I was curious enough, but because I felt that it might give me some key to the understanding of my country and people, some guidance to thought and action. Politics and elections were day-to-day affairs when we grew excited over trumpery matters. But if we were going to build the house of India's future, strong and secure and beautiful, we would have to dig deep for the foundations.

4 : *Bhārat Mātā*

Often as I wandered from meeting to meeting I spoke to my audience of this India of ours, of Hindustan and of *Bhārata,* the old Sanskrit name derived from the mythical founder of the race. I seldom did so in the cities, for there the audiences were more sophisticated and wanted stronger fare. But to the peasant, with his limited outlook, I spoke of this great country for whose freedom we were struggling, of how each part differed from the other and yet was India, of common problems of the peasants from north to south and east to west, of the Swaraj that could only be for all and every part and not for some.

Sometimes as I reached a gathering, a great roar of welcome would greet me : *Bhārat Mātā kī Jai*—Victory to Mother India ! I would ask them unexpectedly what they meant by that cry, who was this *Bhārat Mātā,* Mother India, whose victory they wanted ? My question would amuse them and surprise them, and then, not knowing exactly what to answer, they would look at each other and at me. I persisted in my questioning. At last a vigorous Jat, wedded to the soil from immemorial generations, would say that it was the *dharti,* the good earth of India, that they meant. What earth ? Their particular village patch, or all the patches in the district or province, or in the whole of India ? And so question and answer went on, till they would ask me impatiently to tell them all about it. I would endeavour to do so and explain that India was all this that they had thought, but it was also much more. The mountains and the rivers of India, and the forests and the broad fields, which gave us food, were all dear to us, but what counted ultimately were the people of India, people like them and me, who were spread out all over this vast land. *Bhārat Mātā,* Mother India, was essentially these millions of people, and victory to her meant victory to these people. You are parts of this *Bhārat Mātā,* I told them, you are in a manner yourselves *Bhārat Mātā,* and as this idea slowly soaked

into their brains, their eyes would light up as if they had made a great discovery.

5 : The Variety and Unity of India

The diversity of India is tremendous; it is obvious; it lies on the surface and anybody can see it. It concerns itself with physical appearances as well as with certain mental habits and traits. There is little in common, to outward seeming, between the Pathan of the North-West and the Tamil in the far South. Their racial stocks are not the same, though there may be common strands running through them; they differ in face and figure, food and clothing, and, of course, language. In the North-West Frontier Province there is already the breath of Central Asia, and many a custom there, as in Kashmir, reminds one of the countries on the other side of the Himalayas. Pathan popular dances are singularly like Russian Cossack dancing. Yet, with all these differences, there is no mistaking the impress of India on the Pathan, as this is obvious on the Tamil. This is not surprising, for these border lands, and indeed Afghanistan also, were united with India for thousands of years. The old Turkish and other races who inhabited Afghanistan and parts of Central Asia before the advent of Islam were largely Buddhists, and earlier still, during the period of the Epics, Hindus. The frontier area was one of the principal centres of old Indian culture and it abounds still with ruins of monuments and monasteries and, especially, of the great university of Taxila, which was at the height of its fame two thousand years ago, attracting students from all over India as well as different parts of Asia. Changes of religion made a difference but could not change entirely the mental backgrounds which the people of those areas had developed.

The Pathan and the Tamil are two extreme examples; the others lie somewhere in between. All of them have their distinctive features, all of them have still more the distinguishing mark of India. It is fascinating to find how the Bengalis, the Marathas, the Gujaratis, the

Tamils, the Andhras, the Oriyas, the Assamese, the Kannadigas, the Malayalis, the Sindhis, the Punjabis, the Pathans, the Kashmiris, the Rajputs and the great central block comprising the Hindustani-speaking people, have retained their peculiar characteristics for hundreds of years, have still more or less the same virtues and failings of which old tradition or record tells us, and yet have been throughout these ages distinctively Indian, with the same national heritage and the same set of moral and mental qualities. There was something living and dynamic about this heritage which showed itself in ways of living and a philosophical attitude to life and its problems. Ancient India, like ancient China, was a world in itself, a culture and a civilization which gave shape to all things. Foreign influences poured in and often influenced that culture and were absorbed. Disruptive tendencies gave rise immediately to an attempt to find a synthesis. Some kind of a dream of unity has occupied the mind of India since the dawn of civilization. That unity was not conceived as something imposed from outside, a standardization of externals or even of beliefs. It was something deeper and, within its fold, the widest tolerance of belief and custom was practised and every variety acknowledged and even encouraged.

Differences, big or small, can always be noticed even within a national group, however closely bound together it may be. The essential unity of that group becomes apparent when it is compared to another national group, though often the differences between two adjoining groups fade out or intermingle near the frontiers, and modern developments are tending to produce a certain uniformity everywhere. In ancient and medieval times, the idea of the modern nation was non-existent, and feudal, religious, racial or cultural bonds had more importance. Yet I think that at almost any time in recorded history an Indian would have felt more or less at home in any part of India, and would have felt as a stranger and alien in any other country. He would certainly have felt less of a stranger in countries which had partly adopted his culture or religion. Those who professed a religion of non-Indian origin, and coming to

India settled down there, became distinctively Indian in the course of a few generations, such as Christians, Jews, Parsis, Moslems. Indian converts to some of these religions never ceased to be Indian in spite of a change of faith. All these were looked upon in other countries as Indians and foreigners, even though there might have been a community of faith between them. An Indian Christian is looked upon as an Indian wherever he may go. An Indian Moslem is considered an Indian in Turkey or Arabia or Iran or any other country where Islam is the dominant religion.

6 : *The Culture of the Masses*

Thus I saw the moving drama of the Indian people in the present, and could often trace the threads which bound their lives to the past, even while their eyes were turned towards the future. Everywhere I found a cultural background which had exerted a powerful influence on their lives. This background was a mixture of popular philosophy, tradition, history, myth and legend, and it was not possible to draw a line between any of these. Even the entirely uneducated and illiterate shared this background. The old epics of India, the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata* and other books, in popular translations and paraphrases, were widely known among the masses, and every incident and story and moral in them was engraved on the popular mind and gave a richness and content to it. Illiterate villagers would know hundreds of verses by heart and their conversation would be full of references to them or to some story with a moral, enshrined in some old classic. Often I was surprised by some such literary turn given by a group of villagers to a simple talk about present-day affairs. If my mind was full of pictures from recorded history and more-or-less ascertained fact, I realized that even the illiterate peasant had a picture gallery in his mind, though this was largely drawn from myth and tradition and epic heroes and heroines, and only very little from history. Nevertheless it was vivid enough.

I looked at their faces and their figures and watched

their movements. There was many a sensitive face and many a sturdy body, straight and clean-limbed; and among the women there was grace and suppleness and dignity and poise and, very often, a look that was full of melancholy. Usually the finer physical types were among the upper castes, who were just a little better off in the economic sense. Sometimes, as I was passing along a country road or through a village, I would start with surprise on seeing a fine type of a man, or a beautiful woman who reminded me of some fresco of ancient times. And I wondered how the type endured and continued through ages, in spite of all the horror and misery that India had gone through. What could we not do with these people under better conditions and with greater opportunities opening out to them?

There was poverty and the innumerable progeny of poverty everywhere, and the mark of this beast was on every forehead. Life had been crushed and distorted and made into a thing of evil, and many vices had flowed from this distortion and continuous lack and ever-present insecurity. All this was not pleasant to see; yet that was the basic reality in India. There was far too much of the spirit of resignation and acceptance of things as they were. But there was also a mellowness and a gentleness, the cultural heritage of thousands of years, which no amount of misfortune had been able to rub off.

7 : *Two Lives*

In this and other ways I tried to discover India, the India of the past and of the present, and I made my mood receptive to impressions and to the waves of thought and feeling that came to me from living beings as well as from those who had long ceased to be. I tried to identify myself for a while with this unending procession, at the tail end of which I too was struggling along. And then I would separate myself and as from a hill-top, apart, look down at the valley below.

III : THE DISCOVERY OF INDIA

1 : *The Indus Valley Civilization*

THE Indus Valley civilization, of which impressive remains have been discovered at Mohenjo-daro in Sind and at Harappa in the western Punjab, is the earliest picture that we have of India's past. These excavations have revolutionized the conception of ancient history.

Mohenjo-daro and Harappa are far apart. It was sheer chance that led to the discovery of these ruins in these two places. There can be little doubt that there lie many such buried cities and other remains of the handiwork of ancient man between these two areas. Indeed, there is reason for believing that this civilization had spread right up to the Gangetic valley and possibly even beyond. Unfortunately the inscriptions found at Mohenjo-daro have so far not been fully deciphered and our knowledge of this civilization is consequently incomplete.

But what we know, even thus far, is of the utmost significance. Sir John Marshall, the acknowledged authority on the Indus Valley civilization, who was himself responsible for the excavations, tells us that 'the civilization hitherto revealed at these two places is not an incipient civilization, but one already age-old and stereotyped on Indian soil, with many millennia of human endeavour behind it. Thus India must henceforth be recognized, along with Persia, Mesopotamia, and Egypt, as one of the most important areas where the civilizing processes were initiated and developed'—and 'in some respects even superior to that of a contemporary Mesopotamia and Egypt'. Comparing the two civilizations Marshall draws our attention to a few salient points: for instance, the use of cotton for textiles was exclusively restricted at this period to India and was not extended to the western world until 2,000 or 3,000 years later. Again, there is nothing that we know of in pre-historic

Egypt or Mesopotamia or anywhere else in Western Asia to compare with the well-built baths and commodious houses of the citizens of Mohenjo-daro. In those countries, much money and thought were lavished on the building of magnificent temples for the gods and on the palaces and tombs of kings, but the rest of the people seemingly had to content themselves with insignificant dwellings of mud. In the Indus Valley the finest structures are those erected for the convenience of the citizens. There are also two-storied private houses, made of baked bricks, with bathrooms and a porter's lodge, as well as tenements. Gordon Childe[1] thinks that well-planned streets and the regularly cleared-out drains reflect the vigilance of some strong municipal government. It was obviously an urban civilization, where the craftsmen produced for the market and the merchant class had many commercial contacts with the Sumerian and Mesopotamian civilizations of that period.

Marshall says : 'Equally peculiar to the Indus Valley and stamped with an individual character of their own are its art and its religion. Nothing that we know of in other countries at this period bears any resemblance, in point of style, to the faience models of rams, dogs, and other animals or to the intaglio engravings on the seals, the best of which—notably the short-horn bulls—are distinguished by a breadth of treatment and a feeling for line and plastic form that have rarely been surpassed in glyptic art. . . . In the religion of the Indus people there is much, of course, that might be paralleled in other countries. . . . But, taken as a whole, their religion is so characteristically Indian as hardly to be distinguished from still living Hinduism.'

Between this Indus Valley civilization and today in India there are many gaps and periods about which we know little. But there is always an underlying sense of continuity, and it is surprising how much there is in Mohenjo-daro and Harappa which reminds one of persisting traditions and habits—popular ritual, craftsmanship, even some fashions in dress. Much of this influenced Western Asia.

[1] *What Happened in History* (Pelican ed., p. 112).

What happened to the Indus Valley civilization and how did it end ? We do not know yet. Some people (among them, Gordon Childe) say that there was a sudden end to it owing to an unexpected catastrophe. The river Indus is well known for its mighty floods which overwhelm and wash away cities and villages—or a changing climate might lead to a progressive desiccation of the land and the encroachment of the desert over cultivated areas. The ruins of Mohenjo-daro are themselves evidence of layer upon layer of sand being deposited, raising the ground level of the city and compelling the inhabitants to build higher on the old foundations. The province of Sind, we know, was fertile in ancient times, but from medieval times onwards it has been largely desert. It is probable, therefore, that these climatic changes had a marked effect on the people of these areas and their ways of living.

2 : The Coming of the Aryans

Who were these people of the Indus Valley civilization and whence had they come ? We do not know yet. It is quite possible, and even probable, that their culture was an indigenous culture and its roots and offshoots may be found even in southern India. Even if there was some ancient migration this could only have taken place some thousands of years before the date assigned to Mohenjo-daro.

The Aryan migrations, however, are supposed to have taken place about a thousand years after the Indus Valley period ; and yet it is possible that there was no considerable gap and tribes and peoples came to India from the north-west from time to time, as they did in later ages, and became absorbed in India. We might say that the first great cultural synthesis and fusion took place between the incoming Aryans and the Dravidians, who were probably the representatives of the Indus Valley civilization. Out of this synthesis and fusion grew the Indian races and the basic Indian culture, which had distinctive elements of both. In the ages that followed there came many other races :

Iranians, Greeks, Parthians, Bactrians, Scythians, Huns, *Turkis* or Turks (before Islam), early Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians; they came, made a difference, and were absorbed. India was, according to Dodwell, 'infinitely absorbent like the ocean'. It is odd to think of India with her caste system and exclusiveness having this astonishing inclusive capacity to absorb foreign races and cultures. Perhaps it was due to this that she retained her vitality and rejuvenated herself from time to time. The Moslems, when they came, were also powerfully affected by her. 'The foreigners (Muslim Turks),' says Vincent Smith, 'like their forerunners the Sakas and the Yueh-chi, universally yielded to the wonderful assimilative power of Hinduism, and rapidly became Hinduized.'

3 : *What is Hinduism ?*

In this quotation Vincent Smith has used the words 'Hinduism' and 'Hinduized'. I do not think it is correct to use them in this way unless they are used in the widest sense of Indian culture. They are apt to mislead today when they are associated with a much narrower, and specifically religious, concept. The word 'Hindu' does not occur at all in our ancient literature. The first reference to it in an Indian book is, I am told, in a Tantric work of the eighth century A.C., where 'Hindu' means a people and not the followers of a particular religion. The word is clearly derived from *Sindhu*, the old, as well as the present, Indian name for the Indus. The famous Chinese pilgrim I-tsing, who came to India in the seventh century A.C., writes in his record of travels that the 'northern tribes', that is the people of Central Asia, called India 'Hindu' (*Hsin-tu*) but, he adds, 'this is not at all a common name . . . and the most suitable name for India is the Noble Land (*Aryadesha*)'. The use of the word 'Hindu' in connexion with a particular religion is of very late occurrence.

The old inclusive term for religion in India was *Arya dharma*. *Dharma* really means something more than

religion. It is from a root word which means to hold together, it is the inmost constitution of a thing, the law of its inner being. It is an ethical concept which includes the moral code, righteousness, and the whole range of man's duties and responsibilities. *Arya dharma* would include all the faiths (Vedic and non-Vedic) that originated in India; it was used by Buddhists and Jains as well as by those who accepted the *Vedas*. Buddha always called his way to salvation the 'Aryan Path'.

The expression 'Vedic *dharma*' was also used in ancient times to signify more particularly all those philosophies, moral teachings, rituals and practices, which were supposed to derive from the *Vedas*. Thus all those who acknowledged the general authority of the *Vedas* could be said to belong to the Vedic *dharma*. *Sanatana dharma*, meaning the ancient religion, could be applied to any of the ancient Indian faiths (including Buddhism and Jainism), but the expression has been more or less monopolized today by some orthodox sections among the Hindus who claim to follow the ancient faith.

Buddhism and Jainism were certainly not Hinduism or even the Vedic *dharma*. Yet they arose in India and were integral parts of Indian life, culture and philosophy. A Buddhist or Jain in India is a hundred per cent product of Indian thought and culture, yet neither is a Hindu by faith.

Hinduism, as a faith, is vague, amorphous, many-sided, all things to all men. It is hardly possible to define it, or indeed to say definitely whether it is a religion or not, in the usual sense of the word. In its present form (and even in the past), it embraces many beliefs and practices, from the highest to the lowest, often opposed to or contradicting each other. Its essential spirit seems to be to live and let live. Mahatma Gandhi has attempted to define it: 'If I were asked to define the Hindu creed, I should simply say: Search after truth through non-violent means. A man may not believe in God and still call himself a Hindu. Hinduism is a relentless pursuit after truth. . . . Hinduism is the religion of truth. Truth is God. Denial of God we have known. Denial of truth we have not known.' Truth and non-violence, so says Gandhi; but many eminent and un-

doubted Hindus say that non-violence, as Gandhi understands it, is no essential part of the Hindu creed. We thus have truth left by itself as the distinguishing mark of Hinduism. That, of course, is no definition at all.

Whatever the word we may use for our cultural tradition, we see in the past that some inner urge towards synthesis, derived essentially from the Indian philosophic outlook, was the dominant feature of Indian cultural and even racial development. Each incursion of foreign elements was a challenge to this culture, and it met it successfully by a new synthesis and a process of absorption. This was also a process of rejuvenation and new blooms of culture arose out of it, the background and essential basis, however, remaining much the same. C. E. M. Joad has written about this : ' Whatever the reason, it is a fact that India's special gift to mankind has been the ability and willingness of Indians to effect a synthesis of many different elements both of thoughts and peoples, to create, in fact, unity out of diversity.'

4 : The Earliest Records : Scripture and Mythology

Before the discovery of the Indus Valley civilization, the *Vedas* were supposed to be the earliest records we possess of Indian culture. There was much dispute about the chronology of the Vedic period, European scholars usually giving later dates and Indian scholars much earlier ones. It was curious, this desire on the part of Indians to go as far back as possible and thus enhance the importance of our ancient culture. Professor Winternitz thinks that the beginnings of Vedic literature go back to 2000 B.C. or even 2500 B.C. This brings us very near the Mohenjo-daro period. Whatever the exact date may be, it is probable that this literature is earlier than that of either Greece or Israel, that, in fact, it represents some of the earliest documents of the human mind that we possess. Max Müller has called it ' the first word spoken by the Aryan man as he streamed into the rich land of India '.

How are we to consider the scripture of various religions, much of it believed by its votaries to be revealed scripture? To analyse it and criticize it and look upon it as a human document is often to offend the true believers. Yet there is no other way to consider it.

I have always hesitated to read books of religion. The totalitarian claims made on their behalf did not appeal to me. The outward evidences of the practice of religion that I saw did not encourage me to go to the original sources. Yet I had to drift to these books, for ignorance of them was not a virtue and was often a severe drawback. I knew that some of them had powerfully influenced humanity and anything that could have done so must have some inherent power and virtue in it, some vital source of energy. I found great difficulty in reading through many parts of them, for try as I would, I could not rouse up sufficient interest; but the sheer beauty of some passages would hold me. And then a phrase or a sentence would suddenly leap up and electrify me and make me feel the presence of the really great. Some words of the Buddha or of Christ would shine out with deep meaning and seem to me applicable as much today as when they were uttered two thousand or more years ago. There was a compelling reality about them, a permanence which time and space could not touch. So I felt sometimes when I read about Socrates or the Chinese philosophers, and also when I read the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavadgītā.* Perhaps I did not understand the inner significance of much that I read, and sometimes indeed a second reading threw more light. I made no real effort to understand mysterious passages and I passed by those which had no particular significance for me. For I could not approach these books, or any books, as Holy Writ which must be accepted in their totality without challenge or demur. Indeed this approach of Holy Writ usually resulted in my mind being closed to what they contained. I was much more friendly and open to them when I could consider them as having been written by human beings, very wise and far-seeing, but nevertheless ordinary mortals, and not incarnations or mouthpieces of a divi-

nity, about whom I had no knowledge or surety whatever.

Mythology affected me in much the same way. If people believed in the factual contents of these stories, the whole thing was absurd and ridiculous. But as soon as one ceased believing in them, they appeared in a new light, a new beauty, a wonderful flowering of a richly-endowed imagination, full of human lessons. No one believes now in the stories of Greek gods and goddesses, and so, without any difficulty, we can admire them and they become part of our mental heritage. But if we had to believe in them, what a burden it would be, and how, oppressed by this weight of belief, we would often miss their beauty! Indian mythology is richer, vaster, very beautiful and full of meaning.

5 : *The* Vedas

Many Hindus look upon the *Vedas* as revealed scripture. This seems to me to be peculiarly unfortunate for thus we miss their real significance—the unfolding of the human mind in the earliest stages of thought. And what a wonderful mind it was that gave shape to these bright dreams and lovely fancies! The *Vedas* (from the root *vid* to know) were simply meant to be a collection of the existing knowledge of the day. (It is appropriate, therefore, that there should be this dedication in the *Rig Veda*: 'To the Seers, our Ancestors, the First Path-finders.') They are a jumble of many things: hymns, prayers, rituals for sacrifice, magic, magnificent nature poetry. There is no idolatry in them; no temples for the gods. The vitality and affirmation of life pervading them are extraordinary. These Vedic hymns have been described by Rabindranath Tagore as 'a poetic testament of a people's collective reaction to the wonder and awe of existence. A people of vigorous and unsophisticated imagination awakened at the very dawn of civilization to a sense of the inexhaustible mystery that is implicit in life. It was a simple faith of theirs that attributed divinity to every element and force of Nature, but it was a brave and joyous one, in which fear

of the gods was balanced by trust in them, in which the sense of mystery only gave enchantment to life, without weighing it down with bafflement.'[1] In fact the Vedic Aryans were so full of the zest for life that they paid little attention to the soul.

Gradually, however, thought carries them to strange realms, and brooding on nature's mystery comes, and the spirit of inquiry, till the author of the Veda cries out: 'O Faith, endow us with belief'. These developments take place in the course of hundreds of years, and by the time we reach the end of the *Veda*, the *Vedānta* (*Veda* + *ānta* = end), we have the philosophy of the Upanishads.

6 : *The Acceptance and the Negation of Life*

Every civilization and every people exhibit two parallel streams of an external life and an internal life. Where they meet or keep close to each other, there is an equilibrium and stability. When they diverge, conflict arises and the crises that torture the mind and spirit.

We see from the period of the *Rigveda* hymns onwards the development of both these streams of life and thought. The early ones are full of the external world, of the beauty and mystery of nature, of joy in life and an overflowing vitality. Then thought comes and the spirit of inquiry and the mystery of a transcendental world deepens. Life still continues in abundant measure, but there is also a turning away from its outward manifestations and a spirit of detachment grows as the eyes are turned to things which cannot be seen or heard or felt in the ordinary way.

So we find in India, as elsewhere, these two streams of thought and action—the acceptance of life and the abstention from it—developing side by side, with the emphasis on the one or the other varying in different periods. Yet the basic background of that culture was not one of other-worldliness or world-worthlessness.

[1] Foreword to *Hindu Scriptures* (Everyman's Library).—Ed.

In India we find during every period when her civilization bloomed, an intense joy in life and nature, a pleasure in the act of living, the development of art and music and literature and song and dancing and painting and the theatre, and even a highly sophisticated inquiry into the sex relation. It is inconceivable that a culture or view of life based on other-worldliness or world-worthlessness could have produced all these manifestations of vigorous and varied life. Indeed it should be obvious that any culture that was basically other-worldly could not have carried on for thousands of years.

Yet some people have thought that Indian thought and culture represent essentially the principle of life negation and not of life affirmation. I should have thought that Indian culture, taken as a whole, never emphasized the negation of life, though some of its philosophies did so; it seems to have done so much less than Christianity. Buddhism and Jainism rather emphasized the abstention from life, and in certain periods of Indian history there was a running away from life on a big scale, as, for instance, when large numbers of people joined the Buddhist *vihāras* or monasteries. What the reason for this was I do not know. Equally, or more, significant instances can be found during the Middle Ages in Europe when a widespread belief existed that the world was coming to an end. Perhaps the ideas of renunciation and life negation are caused or emphasized by a feeling of frustration due to political and economic factors.

Buddhism, in spite of its theoretical approach (or rather approaches, for there are several), as a matter of fact avoids extremes; it is the doctrine of the golden mean, the Middle Path. Even the idea of *Nirvana* was very far from being a kind of nothingness, as it is sometimes supposed to be; it was a positive condition but, because it was beyond the range of human thought, negative terms were used to describe it. If Buddhism, a typical product of Indian thought and culture, had merely been a doctrine of life negation or denial, it would surely have had some such effect on the hundreds of millions who profess it. Yet, as a matter of fact, the Buddhist countries are full of evidence to the contrary,

and the Chinese people are an outstanding example of what affirmation of life can be.

The confusion seems to have arisen from the fact that Indian thought was always laying stress on the ultimate purpose of life. It could never forget the transcendent element in its make-up. And so, while affirming life to the full, it refused to become a victim and a slave of life. Indulge in right action with all your strength and energy, it said, but keep above it, and do not worry much about the results of such action. Thus it taught detachment in life and action, not abstention from them. This idea of detachment runs through Indian thought and philosophy, as it does through most other philosophies.

It must be remembered that the business of philosophy in India was not confined to a few philosophers or highbrows. Philosophy was an essential part of the religion of the masses; it percolated to them in some attenuated form and created that philosophic outlook which became nearly as common in India as it is in China. That philosophy was for some a deep and intricate attempt to know the causes and laws of all phenomena, the search for the ultimate purpose of life, and the attempt to find an organic unity in life's many contradictions. But for the many it was a much simpler affair, which yet gave them some sense of purpose, and cause and effect, and endowed them with courage to face trial and misfortune and not lose their gaiety and composure.

7 : *Synthesis and Adjustment : The Beginnings of the Caste System*

The coming of the Aryans into India raised new problems—racial and political. The conquered race, the Dravidians, had a long background of civilization behind them, but there is little doubt that the Aryans considered themselves vastly superior to them and a wide gulf separated the two. Then there were also some backward aboriginal tribes, nomads or forest-dwellers. Out of this conflict and interaction of races gradually rose the caste

system, which, in the course of succeeding centuries, was going to affect Indian life so profoundly. Probably this was neither Aryan nor Dravidian. It was an attempt at the social organization of different races, a rationalization of the facts as they existed at the time. It brought degradation in its train afterwards, and it is still a burden and a curse. But we can hardly judge it from subsequent standards or later developments. It was in keeping with the spirit of the times and some such grading took place in most of the ancient civilizations, though apparently China was free from it. There was a fourfold division in that other branch of the Aryans, the Iranians, during the Sassanian period, but it did not petrify into caste. Many of these old civilizations, including that of Greece, were entirely dependent on mass slavery. There was no such mass or large-scale labour slavery in India, although there were relatively small numbers of domestic slaves. Plato in his *Republic* refers to a division similar to that of the four principal castes. Medieval Catholicism knew this division also.

Caste began with a hard-and-fast division between Aryans and non-Aryans, the latter again being divided into the Dravidian races and the aboriginal tribes. The Aryans, to begin with, formed one class and there was hardly any specialization. The word *arya* comes from a root word meaning to till, and the Aryans as a whole were agriculturists and agriculture was considered a noble occupation. The tiller of the soil functioned also as priest, soldier or trader, and there was no privileged order of priests. The caste divisions, originally intended to separate the Aryans from the non-Aryans, reacted on the Aryans themselves, and as division of functions and specialization increased, the new classes took the form of castes.

Thus at a time when it was customary for the conquerors to exterminate or enslave the conquered races, caste enabled a more peaceful solution which fitted in with the growing specialization of functions. Life was graded and out of the mass of agriculturists evolved the *Vaishyas*, the agriculturists, artisans and merchants; the *Kshatriyas*, or rulers and warriors; and the *Brahmins*, priests and thinkers who were supposed to guide policy

and preserve and maintain the ideals of the nation. Below these three there were the *Shudras* or labourers and unskilled workers, other than the agriculturists. Among the indigenous tribes many were gradually assimilated and given a place at the bottom of the social scale, that is among the Shudras. This process of assimilation was a continuous one. These castes must have been in a fluid condition; rigidity came in much later. Probably the ruling class had always great latitude, and any person who by conquest or otherwise assumed power, could, if he so willed, join the hierarchy as a Kshatriya, and get the priests to manufacture an appropriate genealogy connecting him with some ancient Aryan hero.

The word *arya* ceased to have any racial significance and came to mean 'noble', just as *anarya* meant ignoble and was usually applied to nomadic tribes, forest-dwellers, etc.

The Indian mind was extraordinarily analytical and had a passion for putting ideas and concepts, and even life's activities, into compartments. The Aryans not only divided society into four main groups but also divided the individual's life into four parts: the first part consisted of growth and adolescence, the student period of life, acquiring knowledge, developing self-discipline and self-control, continence; the second was that of the householder and man of the world; the third was that of the elder statesman, who had attained a certain poise and objectivity, and could devote himself to public work without the selfish desire to profit by it; and the last stage was that of the recluse, who lived a life largely cut off from the world's activities. In this way also they adjusted the two opposing tendencies which often exist side by side in man—the acceptance of life in its fullness and the rejection of it.

In India, as in China, learning and erudition have always stood high in public esteem, for learning was supposed to imply both superior knowledge and virtue. Before the learned man, the ruler and the warrior have always bowed. The old Indian theory was that those who were concerned with the exercise of power could not be completely objective. Their personal interests

and inclinations would come into conflict with their public duties. Hence the task of determining values and the preservation of ethical standards was allotted to a class or group of thinkers who were freed from material cares and were, as far as possible, without obligations, so that they could consider life's problems in a spirit of detachment. This class of thinkers or philosophers was thus supposed to be at the top of the social structure, honoured and respected by all. The men of action, the rulers and warriors, came after them and, however powerful they might be, did not command the same respect. The possession of wealth was still less entitled to honour and respect. The warrior class, though not at the top, held a high position, and not as in China, where it was looked upon with contempt.

This was the theory and, to some extent, it may be found elsewhere, as in Christendom in medieval Europe, when the Roman Church assumed the functions of leadership in all spiritual, ethical and moral matters, and even in the general principles underlying the conduct of the State. In practice, Rome became intensely interested in temporal power and the princes of the Church were rulers in their own right. In India the Brahmin class, in addition to supplying the thinkers and the philosophers, became a powerful and entrenched priesthood, intent on preserving its vested interests. Yet this theory, in varying degrees, has influenced Indian life profoundly and the ideal has continued to be of a man full of learning and charity, essentially good, self-disciplined, and capable of sacrificing himself for the sake of others. The Brahmin class has shown all the vices of a privileged and entrenched class in the past and large numbers of Brahmins have possessed neither learning nor virtue. Yet they have largely retained the esteem of the public, not because of temporal power or possession of money, but because they have produced a remarkable succession of men of intelligence, and their record of public service and personal sacrifice for the public good has been a notable one. The tradition was one of respecting learning and goodness in any individual who possessed them. There are innumerable examples of non-Brahmins, and even persons belonging

to the depressed classes, being so respected and sometimes considered as saints. Official status and military power never commanded the same measure of respect, though they may have been feared.

Even today, in this money age, the influence of this tradition is marked and, because of it, Gandhi (who is not a Brahmin) can become the supreme leader of India and move the hearts of millions without force or compulsion of official position or possession of money. Perhaps this is as good a test as any of a nation's cultural background and its conscious or subconscious objective: to what kind of a leader does it give its allegiance?

The central idea of old Indian civilization, or Indo-Aryan culture, was that of *dharma*, which was something much more than religion or creed. It was a conception of obligations, of the discharge of one's duties to oneself and to others. Rights as such were not emphasized. That, to some extent, was the old outlook everywhere. It stands out in marked contrast with the modern assertion of rights of individuals, of groups, of nations.

8 : The Continuity of Indian Culture

Thus in these very early days we find the beginnings of the civilization and culture which were to flower so abundantly and richly in subsequent ages, and which have continued, in spite of many changes, to our own day. The basic ideals, the governing concepts are taking shape, and literature and philosophy, art and drama, and all other activities of life were conditioned by these ideals and world-view. Also we see the seeds of that exclusiveness and touch-me-notism which were to grow and grow till they became rigid, octopus-like, with their grip on everything—the caste system of modern times. Fashioned for a particular day, intended to stabilize the then organization of society and give it strength and equilibrium, it developed into a prison for that social order and for the mind of man. Security was purchased in the long run at the cost of ultimate progress.

Yet it was a very long run and, even within that framework, the vital original impetus for advancement

in all directions was so great that it spread out all over India and over the eastern seas, and its stability was such that Professor Macdonell, in his *History of Sanskrit Literature*,[1] tells us that 'in spite of successive waves of invasion and conquest by Persians, Greeks, Scythians, Muhammadans, the national development of the life and literature of the Indo-Aryan race remained practically unchecked and unmodified from without down to the era of British occupation. . . . No other country except China can trace back its language and literature, its religious beliefs and rites, its domestic and social customs through an uninterrupted development of more than three thousand years.' Carried away by his enthusiasm, Max Müller, the famous orientalist, said (in his lectures delivered before the University of Cambridge, England, in 1882): 'If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power and beauty that nature can bestow—in some parts a very paradise on earth—I should point to India. If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant—I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature, we here in Europe, we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human a life, not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life—again I should point to India.'[2]

Nearly half a century later Romain Rolland wrote in the same strain: 'If there is one place on the face of the earth where all the dreams of living men have found a home from the very earliest days when man began the dream of existence, it is India.'

[1] p. 7.—Ed.
[2] *India: What can it Teach Us?* (Longmans, Green), p. 6.—Ed.

9 : *The* Upanishads

The *Upanishads*, dating from about 800 B.C., take us a step further in the development of Indo-Aryan thought, and it is a big step. The Aryans have long been settled down and a stable, prosperous civilization has grown up, a mixture of the old and the new, dominated by Aryan thought and ideals, but with a background of more primitive forms of worship. The *Vedas* are referred to with respect but also in a spirit of gentle irony. The Vedic gods no longer satisfy and the ritual of the priests is made fun of. But there is no attempt to break with the past, the past is taken as a starting-point for further progress.

The *Upanishads* are instinct with a spirit of inquiry, of mental adventure, of a passion for finding out the truth about things. The search for this truth is of course not by the objective methods of modern science, yet there is an element of the scientific method in that approach. No dogma is allowed to come in the way. Interest in magic and suchlike supernatural knowledge is sternly discouraged, and ritual and ceremonies without enlightenment are said to be vain—'those engaged in them, considering themselves men of understanding and learned, stagger along aimlessly like blind men led by the blind, and fail to reach the goal'. Even the *Vedas* are treated as the lower knowledge; the higher one being that of the inner mind. There is a warning given against philosophical learning without discipline of conduct. And there is a continuous attempt to harmonize social activity with spiritual adventure. The duties and obligations imposed by life were to be carried out, but in a spirit of detachment.

Probably the ethic of individual perfection was over-emphasized and hence the social outlook suffered. 'There is nothing higher than the person,' say the *Upanishads*. Society must have been considered as stabilized and hence the mind of man was continually thinking of individual perfection, and in quest of this it wandered about in the heavens and in the innermost recesses of the heart. This old Indian approach was not

a narrow nationalistic one, though there must have been a feeling that India was the hub of the world, just as China and Greece and Rome have felt at various times. 'The whole world of mortals is an interdependent organism,' says the *Mahābhārata.*

The form of the *Upanishads* is terse, often of question and answer between pupil and teacher, and it has been suggested that the *Upanishads* were some kind of lecture notes made by the teacher or taken down by his disciples. Professor F. W. Thomas in *The Legacy of India* says: 'What gives to the *Upanishads* their unique quality and unfailing human appeal is an earnest sincerity of tone, as of friends conferring upon matters of deep concern.'

The dominating characteristic of the *Upanishads* is the dependence on truth. 'Truth wins ever, not falsehood. With truth is paved the road to the Divine.' And the famous invocation is for light and understanding: 'Lead me from the unreal to the real! Lead me from darkness to light! Lead me from death to immortality!'

Again and again the restless mind peeps out, ever seeking, ever questioning: 'At whose behest doth mind light on its perch? At whose command doth life, the first, proceed? At whose behest do men send forth this speech? What god, indeed, directed eye and ear?' And again: 'Why cannot the wind remain still? Why has the human mind no rest? Why, and in search of what, does the water run out and cannot stop its flow even for a moment?' It is the adventure of man that is continually calling, and there is no resting on the way and no end of the journey. In the *Aitareya Brahmana* there is a hymn about this long endless journey which we must undertake, and every verse ends with the refrain: '*Charaiveti, charaiveti*'—'Hence, O Traveller, march along, march along!'

There is no humility about all this quest, the humility before an all-powerful deity, so often associated with religion. It is the triumph of mind over the environment. 'My body will be reduced to ashes and my breath will join the restless and deathless air, but not I and my deeds.' In a morning prayer the sun is addressed thus: 'O Sun of refulgent glory, I am the

same Person as makes thee what thou art!' What superb confidence!

It is interesting to compare and contrast the intense individualism and exclusiveness of the Indo-Aryans with this all-embracing approach, which overrides all barriers of caste and class and every other external and internal difference. This latter is a kind of metaphysical democracy. 'He who sees the One Spirit in all, and all in the One Spirit, henceforth can look with contempt on no creature.' Though this was theory only, there can be no doubt that it must have affected life and produced that atmosphere of tolerance and reasonableness, that acceptance of free-thought in matters of faith, that desire and capacity to live and let live, which are dominant features of Indian culture, as they are of the Chinese.

In spite of almost insuperable barriers, the message of the *Upanishads* has found willing and eager listeners throughout Indian history and has powerfully moulded the national mind and character. 'There is no important form of Hindu thought, heterodox Buddhism included, which is not rooted in the *Upanishads*,' says Bloomfield.

Early Indian thought penetrated to Greece, through Iran, and influenced some thinkers and philosophers there. Much later, Plotinus came to the East to study Iranian and Indian philosophy and was especially influenced by the mystic element in the *Upanishads*. From Plotinus many of these ideas are said to have gone to St Augustine, and through him influenced the Christianity of the day.

The rediscovery by Europe, during the past century and a half, of Indian philosophy created a powerful impression on European philosophers and thinkers. Schopenhauer, the pessimist, is often quoted in this connexion: 'From every sentence (of the *Upanishads*) deep, original and sublime thoughts arise, and the whole is pervaded by a high and holy and earnest spirit. . . . In the whole world there is no study . . . so beneficial and so elevating as that of the *Upanishads*. . . . (They) are products of the highest wisdom. . . . It is destined sooner or later to become the faith of the people.' And

again: 'The study of the *Upanishads* has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death.'

In another place Max Müller says: 'I spend my happiest hours in reading Vedantic books. They are to me like the light of the morning, like the pure air of the mountains—so simple, so true, if once understood.'

But perhaps the most eloquent tribute to the *Upanishads* and to the later book, the *Bhagavadgītā*, was paid by AE (G. W. Russell), the Irish poet: 'Goethe, Wordsworth, Emerson and Thoreau among moderns have something of this vitality and wisdom, but we can find all they said and much more in the grand sacred books of the East. The *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Upanishads* contain such godlike fullness of wisdom on all things that I feel the authors must have looked with calm remembrance back through a thousand passionate lives, full of feverish strife for and with shadows, ere they could have written with such certainty of things which the soul feels to be sure.'

10 : The Advantages and Disadvantages of an Individualistic Philosophy

There is, in the *Upanishads*, a continual emphasis on the discipline of both body and mind, before effective progress can be made. The acquisition of knowledge, or any achievement, requires restraint, self-suffering, self-sacrifice. This idea of some kind of penance, *tapasyā*, is inherent in Indian thought, both among the thinkers at the top and the unread masses below. It is present today as it was present some thousands of years ago, and it is necessary to appreciate it in order to understand the psychology underlying the mass movements which have convulsed India under Gandhiji's leadership.

It is obvious that the ideas of the authors of the *Upanishads*, the rarefied mental atmosphere in which they moved, were confined to a small body of the elect who were capable of understanding them. They were entirely beyond the comprehension of the vast mass of the people. A creative minority is always small

in numbers but, if it is in tune with the majority, and is always trying to pull the latter up and make it advance, so that the gap between the two is lessened, a stable and progressive culture results. Without that creative minority a civilization must inevitably decay. But it may also decay if the bond between a creative minority and the majority is broken and there is a loss of social unity in society as a whole, and ultimately that minority itself loses its creativeness and becomes barren and sterile. Or else it gives place to another creative or vital force which society throws up.

In course of time the separation between the creative minority and the masses led to new movements—a powerful wave of materialistic philosophy, agnosticism, atheism. Out of this again grew Buddhism and Jainism, and the famous Sanskrit epics, the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata*, wherein yet another attempt was made to bring about a synthesis between rival creeds and ways of thought. The creative energy of the people, or of the creative minority, is very evident during these periods, and again there appears to be a bond between that minority and the majority. On the whole they pull together. The last great period of such activity in a variety of directions was the classical epoch which began in the fourth century after Christ. By about 1000 A.C. or earlier, signs of inner decay in India are very evident, although the old artistic impulse continued to function and produce fine work. The coming of new races with a different background brought a new driving force to India's tired mind and spirit and out of that impact arose new problems and new attempts at solution.

It seems that the intense individualism of the Indo-Aryans led, in the long run, to both the good and the evil that their culture produced. It not only led to the production of very superior types but gave a certain idealist and ethical background to the whole culture, which persisted and still persists, though it may not influence practice much. With the help of this background and by sheer force of example at the top, they held together the social fabric and repeatedly rehabilitated it when it threatened to go to pieces. By their tolerance of other beliefs and other ways than their own,

they avoided the conflicts that have so often torn society asunder, and managed to maintain, as a rule, some kind of equilibrium. By allowing, within the larger framework, considerable freedom to people to live the life of their choice, they showed the wisdom of an old and experienced race. All these were very remarkable achievements.

But that very individualism led them to attach little importance to the social aspect of man, of man's duty to society. In later ages it was to grow into a very prison for the mind of our people—not only for the lower castes, who suffered most from it, but for the higher ones also. Throughout our history it was a weakening factor, and one might perhaps say that along with the growth of rigidity in the caste system, grew rigidity of mind and the creative energy of the race faded away.

Another curious fact seems to stand out. The extreme tolerance of every kind of belief and practice, every superstition and folly, had its injurious side also, for this perpetuated many an evil custom and prevented people from getting rid of the traditional burdens that prevented growth. The growing priesthood exploited this situation to their own advantage.

The appeal was always made to the ancient authorities, but little attempt was made to interpret their truths in terms of changing conditions. The creative and spiritual forces weakened, and only the shell of what used to be so full of life and meaning remained. Aurobindo Ghose has written : 'If an ancient Indian of the time of the *Upanishads*, of the Buddha, or the later classical age were to be set down in modern India . . . he would see his race clinging to forms and shells and rags of the past and missing nine-tenths of its nobler meaning . . . he would be amazed by the extent of the mental poverty, the immobility, the static repetition, the cessation of science, the long sterility of art, the comparative feebleness of the creative intuition.'

11 : *Materialism*

One of our major misfortunes is that we have lost so much of the world's ancient literature—in Greece, in India, and elsewhere. Probably this was inevitable as these books were originally written on palm-leaves or on *bhurjapatra,* and later on paper. The fact that in spite of repeated losses and destruction, and without any organized attempt to discover them, over fifty thousand Indian manuscripts have been brought out, shows how extraordinarily abundant must have been the literary, dramatic, philosophical and other productions of old times. Many old Indian books have so far not been found in India at all, but their translations in Chinese or Tibetan have been discovered.

Among the books that have been lost is the entire literature on materialism which followed the period of the early *Upanishads.* There can be no doubt, however, that the materialist philosophy was professed in India for centuries and had, at the time, a powerful influence on the people. In the famous *Arthashāstra,* by Kautilya, it is mentioned as one of the major philosophies of India. Possibly much of the literature of materialism in India was destroyed by the priests and other believers in the orthodox religion during subsequent periods.

The materialists attacked authority and all vested interests in thought, religion and theology. They denounced the *Vedas* and priestcraft and traditional beliefs, and proclaimed that belief must be free and must not depend on presuppositions or merely on the authority of the past. They inveighed against all forms of magic and superstition. Only that could be presumed to exist which can be directly perceived, every other inference or presumption was equally likely to be true or false. There was no other world, no heaven or hell, no soul separate from the body. Mind and intelligence and everything else have developed from the basic elements. Moral rules are mere conventions made by men.

We recognize all this ; it seems curiously of our day and not of more than two thousand years ago. How did

these thoughts arise, these doubts and conflicts, this rebellion of the mind of man against traditional authority? We do not know enough of social and political conditions then, but it was out of mental turmoil and social maladjustment that new paths grew and new systems of philosophy took shape. Systematic philosophy, not the institutional approach of the *Upanishads*, but based on close reasoning and argument, begins to appear in many garbs, Jain, Buddhist, and what might be called Hindu, for want of a better word. The epics also belong to this period, and the *Bhagavadgītā*.

The period in India after the *Mahābhārata* war, with its seemingly chaotic mental atmosphere, reminds one of the post-Hellenic period of Greece. There was a vulgarization of ideals and then a groping for new philosophies. Actually new schools of philosophy—Stoic and Epicurean—developed later. Politically and economically similar internal changes might have been taking place, such as the weakening of the tribal republic and City State and the tendency to centralize State power.

But this comparison does not take us very far. Greece never really recovered from these shocks, although Greek civilization flourished for some additional centuries in the Mediterranean and influenced Rome and Europe. In India there was a remarkable recovery, and the thousand years from the Epic period and the Buddha onwards were full of creative energy. Innumerable great names in philosophy, literature, the drama, mathematics, and the arts stand out. In the early centuries of the Christian era a remarkable burst of energy results in the organization of colonial enterprises which took the Indian people and their culture to distant islands in the eastern seas.

12 : *The Epics : History, Tradition and Myth*

The two great epics of ancient India—the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata*—deal with the early days of the Indo-Aryans, their conquests and civil wars when they were expanding and consolidating themselves, but they were composed and compiled later. I do not know of

any book anywhere which has exercised such a continuous and pervasive influence on the mass mind as these two. Dating back to a remote antiquity, they are still a living force in the life of the Indian people. Not in the original Sanskrit, except for a few intellectuals, but in translations and adaptations and in those innumerable ways in which tradition and legend spread and become a part of the texture of a people's life.

They represent the typical Indian method of catering all together for various degrees of cultural development, from the highest intellectual to the simple unread and untaught villager. I do not think I ever attached very much importance to these stories as factually true and I even criticized the magical and supernatural element in them. But they were imaginatively true enough for me just as were the stories from the Arabian Nights or the *Panchatantra,* that storehouse of animal tales, from which western Asia and Europe have drawn so much.

If it was so with me in spite of the diverse influences that worked on my mind, I realized how much more must old mythology and tradition work on the minds of others and, especially, the unread masses of our people. That influence is a good influence both culturally and ethically and I would hate to destroy or throw away all the beauty and imaginative symbolism that these stories and allegories contain.

Indian mythology is not confined to the epics, it goes back to the Vedic period and appears in many forms in Sanskrit literature. The poets and the dramatists take full advantage of it and build their stories and lovely fancies round it. The *ashoka* tree is said to burst into flower when touched by the foot of a beautiful woman. We read of the adventures of Kama, the god of love, and his wife, Rati or rapture, with their friend Vasanta, the god of spring. Greatly daring, Kama shoots his flowery arrow at Shiva himself and is reduced to ashes by the fire that flashed out of Shiva's third eye. But he survives as Ananga, the bodiless one.

Unlike the Greeks, and unlike the Chinese and the Arabs, Indians in the past were not historians. This was very unfortunate and it has made it difficult for us now to fix dates or make up an accurate chronology.

Events run into each other, overlap and produce an enormous confusion. There is really only one old book, Kalhana's *Rājatarangini*, a history of Kashmir written in the twelfth century A.C., which may be considered as history. For the rest we have to go to the imagined history of the epics and other books, to some contemporary records, to inscriptions, to artistic and architectural remains, to coins, and to the large body of Sanskrit literature, for occasional hints. Also of course to the many records of foreign travellers who came to India, notably Greeks and Chinese, and, during a later period, Arabs.

This lack of historical sense did not affect the masses, for as elsewhere and more so than elsewhere, they built up their view of that past from the traditional accounts and myth and story that were handed to them from generation to generation. This imagined history and mixture of fact and legend became widely known and gave to the people a strong and abiding cultural background. But the ignoring of history had evil consequences which pursue us still. It produced a vagueness of outlook, a divorce from life as it is, a credulity, a woolliness of the mind where fact was concerned. That mind was not at all woolly in the far more difficult, but more indefinite, realms of philosophy ; it was both analytic and synthetic, often very critical, sometimes sceptical. But where fact was concerned, it was uncritical, because perhaps it did not attach much importance to fact as such.

The impact of science and the modern world have brought a greater appreciation of facts, a more critical faculty, a weighing of evidence, a refusal to accept tradition merely because it is tradition. Many competent historians are at work now, but they often err on the other side and their work is more a meticulous chronicle of facts than living history. But even today it is strange how we suddenly become overwhelmed by tradition and the critical faculties of even intelligent men cease to function.

It is not Indians only who are affected by nationalist urges in the writing or consideration of history. Every nation and people seem to be affected by this desire to

gild and better the past and distort it to their advantage. The histories of India that most of us have had to read, chiefly written by Englishmen, are usually long apologies for and panegyrics of British rule and a barely veiled contemptuous account of what happened here in the millennia preceding it. Indeed real history, for them, begins with the advent of the Englishman into India; all that went before is in some mystic kind of way a preparation for this divine consummation.

But I have digressed and wandered away from the gods and goddesses and the days when myth and legend began. Those were the days when life was full and in harmony with nature, when man's mind gazed with wonder and delight at the mystery of the universe, when heaven and earth seemed very near to each other, and the gods and goddesses came down from Kailasa or their other Himalayan haunts, even as the gods of Olympus used to come down, to play with and sometimes punish men and women. Out of this abundant life and rich imagination grew myth and legend and strong and beautiful gods and goddesses, for the ancient Indians, like the Greeks, were lovers of beauty and of life.

Gradually the days of the Vedic and other gods and goddesses receded into the background and hard and abstruse philosophy took their place. But in the minds of the people these images still floated, companions in joy and friends in distress, symbols of their own vaguely-felt ideals and aspirations. And round them poets wrapped their fancies and built the houses of their dreams, full of rich embroidery and lovely fantasy.

13 : The Mahābhārata

It is difficult to date the epics. The *Rāmāyana* is an epic poem with a certain unity of treatment; the *Mahābhārata* is a vast and miscellaneous collection of ancient lore. Both must have taken shape in the pre-Buddhistic period, though additions were no doubt made later.

Michelet, the French historian, writing in 1864, with special reference to the *Rāmāyana*, says: 'Whoever

has done or willed too much let him drink from this deep cup a long draught of life and youth. . . . Everything is narrow in the West—Greece is small and I stifle; Judaea is dry and I pant. Let me look towards lofty Asia, and the profound East for a little while. There lies my great poem, as vast as the Indian Ocean, blessed, gilded with the sun, the book of divine harmony wherein is no dissonance. A serene peace reigns there, and in the midst of conflict an infinite sweetness, a boundless fraternity, which spreads over all living things, an ocean (without bottom or bound) of love, of pity, of clemency.'

Great as the *Rāmāyana* is as an epic poem, and loved by the people, it is really the *Mahābhārata* that is one of the outstanding books of the world. It is a colossal work, an encyclopaedia of tradition and legend, and of the political and social institutions of ancient India. It is interesting to note that even in these days of total and horrible war, Russian oriental scholars have produced a Russian translation of the *Mahābhārata.*

In the *Mahābhārata* a very definite attempt has been made to emphasize the fundamental unity of India, or *Bhāratvarsha* as it was called from Bharat, the legendary founder of the race. An earlier name was *Aryāvarta*, the land of the Aryas, but this was confined to northern India up to the Vindhya mountains in Central India. The Aryans had probably not spread beyond that mountain range at that period. The *Rāmāyana* story is one of Aryan expansion to the South. The great civil war, which occurred later, described in the *Mahābhārata*, is vaguely supposed to have taken place about the fourteenth century B.C. That was for the overlordship of India (or possibly of northern India), and it marks the beginning of the conception of India as a whole, of *Bhāratvarsha.* This conception included a large part of modern Afghanistan, called Gandhara then, which was considered an integral part of the country. Sister Nivedita (Margaret Noble), writing about the *Mahābhārata*, has pointed out: 'The foreign reader . . . is at once struck by two features: in the first place, its unity in complexity; and in the second, its constant effort to impress on its hearers the idea of

a single centralized India, with an heroic tradition of her own as formative and uniting impulse.'[1]

The *Mahābhārata* contains the Krishna legends and the famous poem, the *Bhagavadgītā*. Even apart from the philosophy of the *Gītā*, it lays stress on ethical and moral principles in statecraft and in life generally. Without this foundation of *dharma* there is no true happiness and society cannot hold together. The emphasis on non-violence, here and elsewhere, is interesting, for no obvious contradiction appears to be noticed between this and fighting for a righteous cause. The whole epic centres round a great war. Evidently the conception of *ahimsa*, non-violence, had a great deal to do with the motive, the absence of the violent mental approach, self-discipline and control of anger and hatred, rather than the physical abstention from violent action, when this became necessary and inevitable.

The teaching of the *Mahābhārata* has been summed up in the phrase: 'Thou shalt not do to others what is disagreeable to thyself.' There is an emphasis on social welfare and this is noteworthy, for the tendency of the Indian mind is supposed to be in favour of individual perfection rather than social welfare. It is not the welfare of a particular group only that it aims at but of the whole world, for 'the entire world of mortals is a self-dependent organism'.

Again: 'Truth, self-control, asceticism, generosity, non-violence, constancy in virtue—these are the means of success, not caste or family.' There is a dig at the seeker after wealth: 'The silkworm dies of its wealth.' And, finally, the injunction so typical of a living and advancing people; 'Discontent is the spur of progress.' Thus the outlook in the *Mahābhārata* is still creative and more or less rationalistic and the feeling of exclusiveness is yet limited. Caste is not rigid. There was still a feeling of confidence, but as external forces invaded and challenged the security of the old order, that confidence lessened somewhat and a demand for

[1] I have taken this quotation from Sir S. Radhakrishnan's *Indian Philosophy* [Vol. I, p. 479—Ed.]. I am indebted to Radhakrishnan for other quotations and much else in this and other chapters.

greater uniformity arose in order to produce internal unity and strength. New taboos grew up. The eating of beef, previously countenanced, is later absolutely prohibited. In the *Mahābhārata* there are references to beef or veal being offered to honoured guests.

14 : The Bhagavadgītā

The *Bhagavadgītā* is part of the *Mahābhārata*, an episode in the vast drama. But it stands apart and is complete in itself. It is a relatively small poem of 700 verses—'the most beautiful, perhaps the only true philosophical song existing in any known tongue,' so William von Humboldt described it. In times of crisis, when the mind of man is tortured by doubt and is torn by the conflict of duties, it has turned all the more to the *Gītā* for light and guidance. For it is a poem of crisis, of political and social crisis and, even more so, of crisis in the spirit of man. Innumerable commentaries on the *Gītā* have appeared in the past and they continue to come out with unfailing regularity. Even the leaders of thought and action of the present day—Tilak, Aurobindo Ghose, Gandhiji—have written on it, each giving his own interpretation. Gandhiji bases his firm belief in non-violence on it, others justify violence and warfare for a righteous cause.

The poem begins with a conversation between Arjuna and Krishna on the very field of battle before the great war begins. Arjuna is troubled, his conscience revolts at the thought of the war and the mass murder that it involves, the killing of friends and relatives—for what purpose ? What conceivable gain can outweigh this loss, this sin ? All his old standards fail him, his values collapse. Arjuna becomes the symbol of the tortured spirit of man, which, from age to age, has been torn by conflicting obligations and moralities. From this personal conversation we are taken step by step to higher and more impersonal regions of individual duty and social behaviour, of the application of ethics to human life, of the spiritual outlook that should govern all. Inaction is condemned, but action and life have to be in

accordance with the highest ideals of the age, for these ideals themselves may vary from age to age. The *yugadharma,* the ideal of the particular age, has always to be kept in view.

Because modern India is full of frustration and has suffered from too much quietism, this call to action makes a special appeal. It is also possible to interpret that action in modern terms as action for social betterment and social service, practical, altruistic, patriotic and humanitarian. And action must be in a spirit of detachment, not much concerned with its results. Right action must however necessarily yield right results (though these may not be immediately apparent), for the law of cause and effect holds good under all circumstances.

The message of the *Gītā* is not sectarian or addressed to any particular school of thought. It is universal in its approach for everyone, Brahmin or outcaste: 'All paths lead to Me,' it says. It is because of this universality that it has found favour with all classes and schools. During the two thousand five hundred years since it was written, Indian humanity went repeatedly through the processes of change and development and decay; but it always found something living in the *Gītā*, something that fitted into the developing thought and had a freshness and applicability to the spiritual problems that afflict the mind.

15 : Life and Work in Ancient India

A great deal has been done by scholars and philosophers to trace the development of philosophic and metaphysical thought in the India of the past; much has also been done to fix the chronology of historic events and draw in broad outline political maps of those periods. But not much has so far been done to investigate the social and economic conditions of those days, how people lived, carried on their work, what they produced and how, and the way trade functioned. The *Mahābhārata* itself is a storehouse of sociological and other data and many more books will no doubt yield

useful information. But they have to be critically examined from this particular point of view. One book of inestimable value is Kautilya's *Arthashāstra* of the fourth century B.C., which gives details of the political, social, economic and military organization of the Maurya Empire.

An earlier account, which definitely takes us back to the pre-Buddhist period in India, is contained in the collection of the *Jātaka* tales. Professor Rhys Davids has described them as the oldest, most complete and most important collection of folklore extant.

The *Jātakas* deal with the period when the final amalgamation of the two principal races of India, the Dravidians and the Aryans, was taking place. They reveal 'a multiform and chaotic society which resists more or less every attempt at classification and about which there can be no talk of an organization according to castes in that age'.[1] The *Jātakas* may be said to represent the popular tradition as contrasted with the priestly or Brahminic tradition and the Kshatriya or ruling class tradition.

There are chronologies and genealogies of various kingdoms and their rulers. Kingship, originally elective, becomes hereditary, according to the rule of primogeniture. Women are excluded from this succession, but there are exceptions. As in China, the ruler is held responsible for all misfortunes. There are references to popular revolts against unjust and tyrannical kings, who are sometimes put to death for their crimes.

Village assemblies enjoyed a measure of autonomy. The chief source of revenue was from the land. It was predominantly an agricultural civilization and the basic unit was the self-governing village. The political and economic structure was built up from these village communities, which were grouped in tens and hundreds. Horticulture, rearing of livestock, and dairy farming were practised on an extensive scale. Gardens and parks were common and fruit and flowers were valued.

Hunting was a regular occupation chiefly for the food

[1] Richard Fick, *The Social Organization in North-East India in Buddha's Time*, p. 286. But Ratilal Mehta's *Pre-Buddhist India* has supplied most of the facts in this chapter.

it provided. Flesh-eating was common and included poultry and fish; venison was highly esteemed. There were fisheries and slaughter-houses. The principal articles of diet were, however, rice, wheat, millet and corn. Sugar was extracted from sugarcane. There were liquor shops and liquor was apparently made from rice, fruit and sugarcane.

Among the manufactured goods are silks, woollens and cotton textiles; rugs, blankets and carpets. Spinning, weaving and dyeing are flourishing and widespread industries. The metallurgical industry produces weapons of war and there is mining for metals and precious stones. The building industry uses stone, wood and bricks. Carpenters make a variety of furniture. Cane-workers make mattresses, baskets, fans, and sunshades. Potters function in every village. From flowers and sandalwood a number of perfumes, oils and 'beauty' products are made, including sandalwood powder. Various medicines and drugs are manufactured and dead bodies are sometimes embalmed.

In addition to artisans and craftsmen there were also teachers, physicians and surgeons, merchants and traders, musicians, astrologers, greengrocers, actors, dancers, itinerant jugglers, acrobats, puppet-players, pedlars, domestic slaves, and *chandālas* who disposed of dead bodies.

Trade associations and craft-guilds had already assumed importance. Even in the epics there are references to trade and craft organizations. The *Mahābhārata* says: 'The safeguard of corporations (guilds) is union.' It is said that 'the merchant-guilds were of such authority that the king was not allowed to establish any laws repugnant to these trade unions'.[1]

One rather extraordinary development emerges from the *Jātaka* accounts. This is the establishment of special settlements or villages of people belonging to particular crafts. Thus there was a carpenters' village, consisting, it is said, of a thousand families, a smiths' village and so on. These specialized villages were usually situated near a city, which absorbed their special

[1] *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, p. 269.

products and which provided them with the other necessaries of life. The whole village apparently worked on co-operative lines and undertook large orders. Probably out of this separate living and organization the caste system developed and spread out.

Great roads, with travellers' rest-houses and occasional hospitals, covered North India and connected distant parts of the country. Trade flourished not only in the country itself but between India and foreign countries. Overseas trade involved shipping, and it is clear that ships were built in India both for the inland waterways and ocean traffic. There are references in the epics to shipping duties being paid by 'merchants coming from afar'. Old Tamil poems tell us of the flourishing port of Kaveripattinam on the Kaveri river in the South, which was a centre of international trade.

Among the exports from India were 'silks, muslins, the finer sorts of cloth, cutlery and armour, brocades, embroideries and rugs, perfumes and drugs, ivory and ivory work, jewellery and gold (seldom silver)—these were the main articles in which the merchant dealt'.[1]

India, or rather North India, was famous for her weapons of war, especially for the quality of her steel, her swords and daggers. When Alexander invaded Persia, it is stated in Firdusi's *Shahnamah* that swords and other weapons were hurriedly sent for by the Persians from India.

Ancient India appears to have made considerable progress in the treatment of iron. There is an enormous Iron Pillar near Delhi which has baffled modern scientists, who have been unable to discover by what process it was made, which has enabled it to withstand oxidization and other atmospheric changes. The inscription on it is in the Gupta script which was in use from the fourth to the seventh century A.C. Some scholars are, however, of opinion that the pillar itself is much older than this inscription, which was added later.

The quality of India's military strength was seen not only when Alexander met with stout resistance from a border chieftain but very soon after Alexander's death

[1] Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, p. 98.

when Seleucus attempted another invasion. He was defeated by Chandragupta and driven back. Indian armies then had an advantage which others lacked ; this was the possession of trained war-elephants, which might be compared to the tanks of today. There are books on the training of elephants, the breeding of horses, etc. ; each one of these is called a *shāstra*, for everything that seemed useful to life was the object of inquiry.

Writing in India goes back to the most ancient times. Old pottery belonging to the Neolithic period is inscribed with writing in the Brahmi characters which are undoubtedly the basic script from which Devanagari and others have arisen in India.

As early as the sixth or seventh century B.C., Panini wrote his great grammar of the Sanskrit language. He mentions previous grammars and already in his time Sanskrit had crystallized and become the language of an ever-growing literature. Panini's book is something more than a mere grammar. It has been described by the Soviet Professor Th. Tscherbatsky of Leningrad as 'one of the greatest productions of the human mind'. It is interesting to note that Panini mentions the Greek script. This indicates that there were some kind of contacts between India and the Greeks long before Alexander came to the East.

The study of astronomy was especially pursued and it often merged into astrology. Medicine had its text-books, and the best known are by Charak on medicine and Sushruta on surgery. There is an experimental approach, and dissection of dead bodies was practised in the course of surgical training. Various surgical instruments are mentioned by Sushruta, as well as operations, including amputation of limbs, abdominal, caesarian section, cataract, etc. Wounds were sterilized by fumigation. In the third or fourth century B.C. there were also hospitals for animals. This was probably due to the influence of Jainism and Buddhism with their emphasis on non-violence.

In mathematics the ancient Indians made some epoch-making discoveries, notably that of the zero sign, of the decimal place-value system, of the use of the minus sign, and the use in algebra of letters of the alphabet to denote

unknown quantities. Ten formed the basis of enumeration in India even at the time of the *Rigveda*. The ancient Indians had a long series of number names for very high numerals. The Greeks, Romans, Persians and Arabs had apparently no terminology for denominations above the thousand or at most the myriad ($10^4 =$ 10,000). In India there were 18 specific denominations (10^{18}) and there are even longer lists.

At the other end of the scale there was a minute division of time of which the smallest unit was approximately one-seventeenth of a second, and the smallest lineal measure is given as something which approximates to $1{\cdot}3 \times 7^{-10}$ inches. All these big and small figures were no doubt entirely theoretical and used for philosophical purposes. Nevertheless the old Indians, unlike other ancient nations, had vast conceptions of time and space. They thought in a big way. Even their mythology deals with ages of hundreds of millions of years. To them the vast periods of modern geology or the astronomical distances of the stars would not have come as a surprise. Because of this background, Darwin's and other similar theories could not create here the turmoil and inner conflict which they produced in Europe in the middle of the nineteenth century. The popular mind in Europe was used to a time scale which did not go beyond a few thousand years.

In the Epic period we have frequent mention of some kind of forest universities, situated not far from a town or city, where students gathered round well-known scholars for training and education, which comprised a variety of subjects, including military training. These forest abodes were preferred so as to avoid the distractions of city life and enable the students to lead a disciplined and continent life.

Benares has always been a centre of learning and even in Buddha's day it was old and known as such. It was in the Deer Park near Benares that Buddha preached his first sermon. But Benares does not appear to have been at any time anything like a university. There were numerous groups there consisting of a teacher and his disciples, and often between rival groups there was fierce debate and argument.

But in the north-west, near modern Peshawar, there was an ancient and famous university at Takshashila or Taxila. This was particularly noted for science, especially medicine, and the arts, and people went to it from distant parts of India. Probably students came also from Central Asia and Afghanistan as it was conveniently situated. It was considered an honour and a distinction to be a graduate of Taxila. It is related that whenever Buddha felt unwell, his admirers brought to him a famous physician who had graduated from Taxila. Panini, the great grammarian of the sixth/seventh century B.C., is said to have studied there.

The legal position of women, according to Manu, the earliest exponent of the law, was definitely bad. They were always dependent on somebody—on the father, the husband, or the son. But in practice they held an honoured place in the home and in society. Manu himself says: 'Where women are honoured, the gods dwell.' There is no mention of women students at Taxila or any of the old universities. But some of them did function as students somewhere for there is repeated mention of learned and scholarly women. Bad as the legal position of women was in ancient India, judged by modern standards, it was far better than in ancient Greece, Rome, early Christianity, and indeed till right up to comparatively modern times at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

What were the Indians like in those distant days? It is difficult for us to conceive of a period so far and so different from ours, and yet some vague picture emerges from the miscellaneous data that we have. They were confident and proud of their traditions, dabbling in the search for the mysterious, full of questions addressed to nature and human life, attaching importance to the standards and values they had created, but taking life easily and joyously, and facing death without much concern. Arrian, the Greek historian of Alexander's campaign in North India, was struck by this lightheartedness of the race. 'No nation', he writes, 'is fonder of singing and dancing than the Indian.'

16 : *Mahavira and Buddha : Caste*

Some such background existed in North India from the time of the epics onwards to the early Buddhist period. It was ever changing politically and economically, and in the realm of ideas there was continuous growth and often conflict. The early *Upanishads* had been followed by the development of thought and activity in many directions ; they were themselves a reaction against priestcraft and ritualism. Out of that rebellion had grown these early *Upanishads* as well as, a little later, the strong current of materialism, and Jainism and Buddhism, and the attempt to synthesize various forms of belief in the *Bhagavadgītā*. Out of all this again grew the six systems of Indian philosophy.

Both Jainism and Buddhism were break-aways from the Vedic religion and its offshoots, though in a sense they had grown out of it. They deny the authority of the *Vedas* and, most fundamental of all matters, they deny or say nothing about the existence of a first cause. Both lay emphasis on non-violence and build up organizations of celibate monks and priests. There is a certain realism and rationalism in their approach, though inevitably this does not carry one very far in our dealings with the invisible world.

Mahavira, the founder of Jainism, and Buddha were contemporaries, and both came from the *Kshatriya* warrior class.

Buddha had the courage to attack popular religion, superstition, ceremonial and priestcraft, and all the vested interests that clung to them. His appeal was to logic, reason and experience ; his emphasis was on ethics, and his method was one of psychological analysis, a psychology without a soul. His whole approach comes like the breath of the fresh wind from the mountains after the stale air of metaphysical speculation.

It is curious and significant that throughout the long span of Indian history there have been repeated warnings given by great men against priestcraft and the rigidity of the caste system, and powerful movements have risen against them ; yet slowly, imperceptibly,

almost, it seems, as if it were the inevitable course of destiny, caste has grown and spread and seized every aspect of Indian life in its strangling grip. Rebels against caste have drawn many followers, and yet in course of time their group has itself become a caste. Jainism, a rebel against the parent religion and in many ways utterly different from it, was yet tolerant to caste and adapted itself to it; and so it survives and continues in India, almost as an offshoot of Hinduism. Buddhism, not adapting itself to caste, and more independent in its thought and outlook, ultimately passes away from India, though it influences India and Hinduism profoundly. Christianity comes here eighteen hundred years ago and settles down and gradually develops its own castes. The Moslem social structure in India, in spite of its vigorous denunciation of all such barriers within the community, is also partly affected.

In our own period numerous movements to break the tyranny of caste have arisen among the middle classes and they have made a difference, but not a vital one, so far as the masses were concerned. Their method was usually one of direct attack. Then Gandhi came and tackled the problem, after the immemorial Indian fashion, in an indirect way, and his eyes were on the masses. He has been direct enough, aggressive enough, persistent enough, but without challenging the original basic functional theory underlying the four main castes. He has attacked the rank undergrowth and overgrowth, knowing well that he was undermining the whole caste structure thereby.[1] He has already shaken the foundations and the masses have been powerfully affected. For them the whole structure holds or breaks all together. But an even greater power than he is at work: the conditions of modern life—and it seems that at last this hoary and tenacious relic of past times must die.

But while we struggle with caste in India, new and exclusive overbearing castes have arisen in the West with doctrines of racial exclusiveness, sometimes clothed

[1] 'The caste system, as we know, is an anachronism. It must go if both Hinduism and India are to live and grow from day to day.' (*Harijan*, 16 July 1947.—Ed.)

in political and economic terms, and even speaking in the language of democracy.

17 : *Buddha's Teaching*

For more than the debates and arguments, of which India has always been so enamoured, the personality of a tremendous and radiant being had impressed the people and his memory was fresh in their minds. His message, old and yet very new and original for those immersed in metaphysical subtleties, captured the imagination of intellectuals ; it went deep down into the hearts of the people too. 'Go unto all lands,' had said the Buddha to his disciples, 'and preach this gospel. Tell them that all castes unite in this religion as do the rivers in the sea.' His message was one of universal benevolence, of love for all. For, 'Never in this world does hatred cease by hatred ; hatred ceases by love'. And, 'Let a man overcome anger by kindness, evil by good'.

It was an ideal of righteousness and self-discipline. 'One may overcome a thousand men in battle, but he who conquers himself is the greatest victor.' 'Not by birth, but by his conduct alone, does a man become a low-caste or a Brahmin.'

All this he preached without any religious sanction or any reference to God or another world. Whether there is a god or an Absolute or not, he does not say. Where knowledge is not possible, we must suspend judgement. In answer to a question, Buddha is reported to have said : 'If by the absolute is meant something out of relation to all known things, its existence cannot be established by any known reasoning. How can we know that anything unrelated to other things exists at all ? The whole universe, as we know it, is a system of relations : we know nothing that is, or can be, unrelated.' So we must limit ourselves to what we can perceive and about which we can have definite knowledge.

So also Buddha gives no clear answer about the existence of the soul. He does not deny it and he does

not affirm it. He does, however, believe in the permanence of a natural law, of universal causation, of each successive state being determined by pre-existing conditions, of virtue and happiness and vice and suffering being organically related. The river flows continuously and appears to be the same from moment to moment, yet the waters are ever changing. So also fire. The flame keeps glowing and even maintains its shape and form, yet it is never the same flame and it changes every instant. So everything continually changes and life in all its forms is a stream of becoming. Reality is not something that is permanent and unchanging, but rather a kind of radiant energy, a thing of forces and movements, a succession of sequences. The idea of time is just 'a notion abstracted by mere usage from this or that event'. Our bodies and our souls change from moment to moment. In a sense we are dying all the time and being reborn, and this succession gives the appearance of an unbroken identity. It is 'the continuity of an ever-changing identity'. Everything is flux, movement, change.

All this is difficult to grasp, used as we are to set methods of thinking and interpreting physical phenomena. Yet it is remarkable how near this philosophy of the Buddha brings us to some of the concepts of modern physics and modern philosophic thought.

Buddha's method was one of psychological analysis and, again, it is surprising to find how deep was his insight into this latest of modern sciences. The mind was looked upon as part of the body, a composite of mental forces. The individual thus becomes a bundle of mental states, the self is just a stream of ideas. 'All that we are is the result of what we have thought.'

There is an emphasis on the pain and suffering of life, and the 'Four Noble Truths' which Buddha enunciated deal with this suffering, its cause, the possibility of ending it, and the way to do it.

Through an ending of this state of suffering is reached '*nirvana*'. As to what *nirvana* is, people differ, for it is impossible to describe a transcendental state in our inadequate language and in terms of the concepts of our limited minds. Some say it is just extinction, a

blowing out. And yet Buddha is reported to have denied this and indicated that it was an intense kind of activity. It was the extinction of false desire and not just annihilation. Buddha's way was the Middle Path, between the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. From his own experience of mortification of the body, he said that a person who has lost his strength cannot progress along the right path.

Buddha told his disciples what he thought they could understand and live up to. His teaching was not meant to be a full explanation of everything, a complete revelation of all that is. Once, it is said, he took some dry leaves in his hand and asked his favourite disciple Ananda to tell him whether there were any other leaves besides those in his hand. Ananda replied: 'The leaves of autumn are falling on all sides, and there are more of them than can be numbered.' Then said the Buddha: 'In like manner I have given you a handful of truths, but besides these there are many thousands of other truths more than can be numbered.'

18 : The Buddha Story

The Buddha story attracted me even in early boyhood and I was drawn to the young Siddhartha who, after many inner struggles and pain and torment, was to develop into the Buddha. Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia* became one of my favourite books. In later years, when I travelled about a great deal in my province, I liked to visit the many places connected with the Buddha legend, sometimes making a detour for the purpose. Most of these places lie in my province or not far from it. Here (on the Nepal frontier) Buddha was born, here he wandered, here (at Gaya in Bihar) he sat under the Bodhi tree and gained enlightenment, here he preached his first sermon, here he died.

When I visited countries where Buddhism is still a living and dominant faith, I went to see the temples and the monasteries and met monks and laymen, and tried to make out what Buddhism had done to the people. There was much I did not like. The rational ethical doctrine

had become overlaid with so much verbiage and so much ceremonial. Despite Buddha's warning, they had deified him, and his huge images, in the temples and elsewhere, looked down upon me and I wondered what he would have thought. Many of the monks were ignorant persons, rather conceited and demanding obeisance, if not to themselves then to their vestments. In each country the national characteristics had imposed themselves on the religion and shaped it according to their distinctive customs and modes of life. All this was natural enough and perhaps an inevitable development.

But I saw much also that I liked. There was an atmosphere of peaceful study and contemplation in some of the monasteries and the schools attached to them. There was a look of peace and calm on the faces of many of the monks, a dignity, a gentleness, an air of detachment and freedom from the cares of the world. Did all this fit in with life today or was it a mere escape from it ? Could it not be fitted into life's ceaseless struggle and tone down the vulgarity and acquisitiveness and violence that afflict us ?

The conception of the Buddha, to which innumerable loving hands have given shape in carven stone and marble and bronze, seems to symbolize the whole spirit of Indian thought, or at least one vital aspect of it. Seated on the lotus flower, calm and impassive, above passion and desire, beyond the storm and strife of this world, so far away he seems, out of reach, unattainable. Yet again we look and behind those still, unmoving features there is a passion and an emotion, strange and more powerful than the passions and emotions we have known. His eyes are closed, but some power of the spirit looks out of them and a vital energy fills the frame. The ages roll by and Buddha seems not so far away after all ; his voice whispers in our ears and tells us not to run away from the struggle but, calm-eyed, to face it, and to see in life ever greater opportunities for growth and advancement.

Personality counts today as ever, and a person who has impressed himself on the thought of mankind as Buddha has must have been a wonderful man—a man who was, as Barth says, the 'finished model of calm

and sweet majesty, of infinite tenderness for all that breathes and compassion for all that suffers, of perfect moral freedom and exemption from every prejudice'. And the nation and the race which can produce such a magnificent type must have deep reserves of wisdom and inner strength.

19 : Chandragupta and Chanakya : The Maurya Empire established

Two and a half centuries later, the Emperor Ashoka felt the influence of this personality and became a convert to the faith and devoted all his energies to spreading it by peaceful missionary efforts in India and foreign countries.

But these two centuries after Buddha saw many changes in India. Various processes had long been going on to bring about racial fusion and to amalgamate the petty States and small kingdoms and republics; the old urge to build up a united centralized State had been working, and out of all this emerged a powerful and highly developed Empire. Alexander's invasion of the north-west gave the final push to this development, and two remarkable men arose who could take advantage of the changing conditions and mould them according to their will. These men were Chandragupta Maurya and his friend and minister and counsellor, the Brahmin Chanakya. This combination functioned well. Both had been exiled from the powerful Nanda kingdom of Magadha which had its headquarters at Pataliputra (the modern Patna); both went to Taxila in the north-west and came in contact with the Greeks stationed there by Alexander. Chandragupta met Alexander himself; he heard of his conquests and glory and was fired by ambition to emulate him. Both of them watched and prepared themselves; they hatched great and ambitious schemes and waited for the opportunity to realize them.

Soon news came of Alexander's death at Babylon in 323 B.C., and immediately Chandragupta and Chanakya raised the old and ever new cry of nationalism and

roused the people against the foreign invader. The Greek garrison was driven away and Taxila captured and the Maurya Empire had been established. For the first time in recorded history a vast centralized State had risen in India. The city of Pataliputra was the capital of this great Empire.

Chanakya has been called the Indian Machiavelli and to some extent the comparison is justified. But he was a much bigger person in every way, greater in intellect and action. He was no mere follower of a king, a humble adviser of an all-powerful Emperor. A picture of him emerges from an old Indian play—the *Mudrā-Rākshasa*—which deals with this period. Bold and scheming, proud and revengeful, never forgetting a slight, never forgetting his purpose, availing himself of every device to delude and defeat the enemy, he sat with the reins of Empire in his hands and looked upon the Emperor more as a loved pupil than as a master. Simple and austere in his life, uninterested in the pomp and pageantry of high position, when he had redeemed his pledge and accomplished his purpose, he wanted to retire, Brahmin-like, to a life of contemplation. Unscrupulous and rigid as Chanakya was in the pursuit of his aim, he never forgot that it was better to win over an intelligent and high-minded enemy than to crush him. His final victory was obtained by sowing discord in the enemy's ranks, and, in the very moment of this victory, so the story goes, he induced Chandragupta to be generous to his rival chief. Chanakya himself is said to have handed over the insignia of his own high office to the minister of that rival, whose intelligence and loyalty to his old chief had impressed him greatly. So the story ends not in the bitterness of defeat and humiliation, but in reconciliation and in laying the firm and enduring foundations of a State which had not only defeated but won over its chief enemy.

According to the author of the *Arthashāstra*, the king, at his coronation, had to take the oath of service to the people—' May I be deprived of heaven, of life, and of offspring if I oppress you.' ' In the happiness of his subjects lies his happiness, in their welfare, his welfare.' [1]

[1] Translated by R. Shanasastry (1923), p. 41.—Ed.

Public work could not suffer or await the king's pleasure ; he had always to be ready for it. And if the king misbehaved, his people had the right to remove him and put another in his place.

20 : Ashoka

The contacts between India and the Western world which Chandragupta Maurya had established continued during the reign of his son Bindusara. Ambassadors came to the court at Pataliputra from Ptolemy of Egypt and Antiochus, the son and successor of Seleucus Nikator of western Asia. Ashoka, grandson of Chandragupta, added to these contacts and India became in his time an important international centre, chiefly because of the rapid spread of Buddhism.

Ashoka succeeded to this great Empire about 273 B.C. The old dream of uniting the whole of India under one supreme government fired Ashoka and forthwith he undertook the conquest of Kalinga on the east coast, which corresponds roughly with modern Orissa and part of Andhra. His armies triumphed in spite of the brave and obstinate resistance of the people of Kalinga. There was terrible slaughter in this war, and when news of it reached Ashoka he was stricken with remorse and disgusted with war. Unique among the victorious monarchs and captains in history, he decided to abandon warfare in the full tide of victory. The whole of India acknowledged his sway, except for the southern tip, which was his for the taking. But he refrained from any further aggression, and his mind turned, under the influence of Buddha's gospel, to conquests and adventures in other fields.

What Ashoka felt and how he acted are known to us in his own words in the numerous edicts he issued, carved in rock and metal. In one of the edicts it is said : 'Directly after the annexation of the Kalingas began His Sacred Majesty's zealous protection of the Law of Piety, his love of that Law, and his inculcation of that Law (*Dharma*). Thus arose His Sacred Majesty's remorse for having conquered the Kalingas, because the

conquest of a country previously unconquered involves the slaughter, death and carrying away captive of the people. That is a matter of profound sorrow and regret to His Sacred Majesty.'[1] This astonishing ruler, beloved still in India and in many other parts of Asia, devoted himself to the spread of Buddha's teaching of righteousness and good-will, and to public works for the people. He was no passive spectator of events, lost in contemplation and self-improvement. He laboured hard at public business and declared that he was always ready for it: 'At all times and at all places, whether I am dining or in the ladies' apartments, in my bedroom or in my closet, in my carriage or in my palace gardens, the official reporters should keep me informed of the people's business. . . . At any hour, at any place, work I must for the commonweal.'[2]

His messengers and ambassadors went to Syria, Egypt, Macedonia, Cyrene and Epirus, conveying his greetings and Buddha's message. They went to Central Asia also and to Burma and Siam, and he sent his own son and daughter, Mahendra and Sanghamitra, to Ceylon in the south. Everywhere an appeal was made to the mind and the heart; there was no force or compulsion. Ardent Buddhist as he was, he showed respect and consideration for all other faiths. He proclaimed in an edict: 'All sects deserve reverence for one reason or another. By thus acting a man exalts his own sect and at the same time does service to the sects of other people.'[3]

Buddhism spread rapidly in India from Kashmir to Ceylon. It penetrated into Nepal and later reached Tibet and China and Mongolia. In India one of the consequences of this was the growth of vegetarianism and abstention from alcoholic drinks. Till then both Brahmins and Kshatriyas often ate meat and took wine. Animal sacrifice was forbidden.

Because of the growth of foreign contacts and missionary enterprises, trade between India and other countries must also have grown. The Indian universities,

[1] Edict XIII (Shasbazgarhi).—ED. [2] Edict VI (Girnar).—ED.
[3] Edict XII (Girnar).—ED.

especially Taxila, also attracted more students from abroad.

Ashoka was a great builder, and the famous many-pillared hall in his palace at Pataliputra was partly dug out by archaeologists about thirty years ago. Dr Spooner of the Archaeological Department of India in his official report said that this was 'in an almost incredible state of preservation, the logs which formed it being as smooth and perfect as the day they were laid, more than two thousand years ago'.

Ashoka died in 232 B.C. after ruling strenuously for forty-one years. Of him H. G. Wells says in his *Outline of History*: 'Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history, their majesties and graciousnesses and serenities and royal highnesses and the like, the name of Ashoka shines, and shines almost alone, a star. From the Volga to Japan his name is still honoured. China, Tibet, and even India, though it has left his doctrine, preserve the tradition of his greatness. More living men cherish his memory today than have ever heard the names of Constantine or Charlemagne.'

IV : THROUGH THE AGES

1 : Nationalism and Imperialism under the Guptas

THE Maurya Empire faded away and gave place to the Sunga dynasty. In Central Asia the Shakas or Scythians, who had established themselves in the Oxus valley, were driven out by the Yueh Chih, coming from further east, and pushed into North India. These Shakas became converts to Buddhism and Hinduism. The Kushans, one of the clans among the Yueh Chih, defeated the Shakas, pushed them still further south and thereupon established an extensive and durable empire over the whole of North India and a great part of Central Asia. Some of them became converts to the Hindu faith, but most of them became Buddhists, and their most famous king, Kanishka, is also one of the heroes of Buddhist legend, which records his great deeds and public works. This borderland State, called the Kushan Empire, with its seat near modern Peshawar, and the old university of Taxila nearby, became the meeting place of men from many nations, and the various cultures reacted on each other. A vigorous school of sculpture and painting arose as a result of their interactions.

During the Kushan period a great schism divided Buddhism into two sections—the Mahayana and the Hinayana—and controversy raged between them and, as has been India's way, the issue was put to debate in great assemblies, to which representatives came from all over the country. Kashmir was situated near the centre of the empire and was full of this debate and of cultural activities. One name stands out in this controversy, that of Nagarjuna, who lived in the first century A.C. He was a towering personality, great in Buddhist scholarship and Indian philosophy, and it was largely because of him that Mahayana triumphed in India. It was the

Mahayana doctrine that spread to China, while Ceylon and Burma adhered to Hinayana.

The Kushans had Indianized themselves and had become patrons of Indian culture; yet an undercurrent of nationalist resistance to their rule continued, and when, later, fresh tribes poured into India, this nationalist and anti-foreign movement took shape at the beginning of the fourth century A.C. Another great ruler, also named Chandragupta, drove out the new intruders and established a powerful and widespread empire.

Thus began, in 320 A.C., the age of the imperial Guptas which produced a remarkable succession of great rulers, successful in war and in the arts of peace. Repeated invasions had produced a strong anti-foreign feeling, and the old Brahmin-Kshatriya element in the country was forced to think in terms of defence of both their homeland and their culture.

The Brahminic faith and philosophy were tolerant and chivalrous to the various religions and racial elements in India, and they still continued to absorb them into their wide-flung structure, but they became increasingly aggressive to the outsider and sought to protect themselves against his impact. In doing so, the spirit of nationalism they had roused often took on the semblance of imperialism, as it frequently does when it grows in strength. The age of the Guptas, enlightened, vigorous, highly cultured, and full of vitality as it was, rapidly developed these imperialistic tendencies. One of its great rulers, Samudragupta, has been called the Indian Napoleon. From a literary and artistic point of view it was a brilliant period.

From early in the fourth century onwards for about a hundred and fifty years the Guptas ruled over a powerful and prosperous state in the North. For almost another century and a half their successors continued, but they were on the defensive now and the empire shrank and became smaller and smaller. New invaders from Central Asia were pouring into India and attacking them. These were the White Huns, as they are called, who ravaged the land, as under Attila they were ravaging Europe.

The Huns were finally crushed by the King of Kanauj, Harshavardhana, who thereafter built up a powerful state right across Northern and Central India. He was an ardent Buddhist, but his Buddhism was of the Mahayana variety which was akin in many ways to Hinduism. He encouraged both Buddhism and Hinduism. It was in his time that the famous Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang (or Yuan Chwang) came to India (in 629 A.C.). Harshavardhana was a poet and dramatist and he gathered round his court many artists and poets, making his capital Ujjayini a famous centre of cultural activities.

2 : South India

In South India, for more than a thousand years after the Maurya Empire had shrunk and finally ceased to be, great States flourished. The repeated invasions of North India did not affect the South directly. Indirectly they led to many people from the North migrating to the South and these included builders and craftsmen and artisans. The South thus became a centre of the old artistic traditions while the North was more affected by new currents which the invaders brought with them. This process was accelerated in later centuries and the South became the stronghold of Hindu orthodoxy.

3 : Peaceful Development and Methods of Warfare

A brief account of repeated invasions and of empire succeeding empire is likely to convey a very wrong idea of what was taking place in India. It must be remembered that the period dealt with covers a thousand years or more and the country enjoyed long stretches of peaceful and orderly government.

The Mauryas, the Kushans, the Guptas, and, in the South, the Andhras, Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas and others, each lasted for two or three hundred years longer, as

a rule, than the British Empire has so far lasted in India. Nearly all these were indigenous dynasties and even those, like the Kushans, who came from across the northern border, soon adapted themselves to this country and its cultural traditions and functioned as Indian rulers with their roots in India.

Even when there was war between two States, or there was an internal political revolution, there was relatively little interference with the activities of the mass of the people. The old Indo-Aryan theory of warfare strictly laid down that no illegitimate methods were to be employed and a war for a righteous cause must be righteously conducted. How far the practice fitted in with the theory is another matter. The use of poisoned arrows was forbidden, so also concealed weapons, or the killing of those who were asleep or who came as fugitives or suppliants. It was declared that there should be no destruction of fine buildings. But this view was already undergoing a change in Chanakya's time and he approves of more destructive and deceptive methods, if they are considered essential for the defeat of the enemy.

India has had many distressful periods in the course of her long history, when she was ravaged by fire and sword or by famine, and internal order collapsed. Yet a broad survey of this history appears to indicate that she had a far more peaceful and orderly existence for long periods of time at a stretch than Europe has had. And this applies also to the centuries following the Turkish and Afghan invasions, right up to the time when the Moghul Empire was breaking up. The notion that the Pax Britannica brought peace and order for the first time to India is one of the most extraordinary of delusions. It is true that when British rule was established in India the country was at her lowest ebb and there was a break-up of the political and economic structure. That indeed was one of the reasons why that rule was established.

4 : *India's Urge to Freedom*

The East bowed low before the blast,
In patient, deep disdain.
She let the legions thunder past,
And plunged in thought again.

So says the poet, and his lines are often quoted. It is true that the East, or at any rate that part of it which is called India, has been enamoured of thinking, often of thinking about matters which to those who consider themselves practical men seem absurd and pointless. She has always honoured thought and the men of thought, the highbrows, and has refused to consider the men of the sword or the possessors of money as superior to them. Even in her days of degradation, she has clung to thought and found some comfort in it.

But it is not true that India has ever bowed patiently before the blast or been indifferent to the passage of foreign legions. Always she has resisted them and her method has been twofold : to fight them and drive them out, and to absorb those who could not be driven away. She resisted, with considerable success, Alexander's legions, and immediately after his death drove out the Greek garrisons in the North. Later she absorbed the Indo-Greeks and the Indo-Scythians and ultimately again established a national hegemony. She fought the Huns for generations and drove them out ; such as remained being absorbed. When the Arabs came they stopped near the Indus. The Turkis and Afghans spread further only gradually. It took them several centuries to establish themselves firmly on the throne of Delhi. It was a continuous, long-drawn-out conflict and, while this struggle was going on, the other process of absorption and Indianization was also at work, ending in the invaders becoming as much Indian as anyone else. Akbar became the great representative of the old Indian ideal of a synthesis of differing elements and their fusion into a common nationality. He identified himself with India, and India took to him although he was a newcomer ; because of this he built

well and laid the foundation of a splendid empire. So long as his successors kept in line with this policy and with the genius of the nation, their empire endured. When they broke away and opposed the whole drift of national development, they weakened and their empire went to pieces. Where the Mughuls failed the British triumphed, but hardly had they established themselves in the North when the great mutiny broke out and developed into a war of independence, and nearly put an end to British rule. The urge to freedom, to independence, has always been there, and the refusal to submit to alien domination.

5 : *Progress versus Security*

We have been changing continually throughout the ages and at no period were we the same as in the one preceding it. Yet I cannot get over the fact that the Indian and Chinese civilizations have shown an extraordinary staying power and adaptability and, in spite of many changes and crises, have succeeded, for an enormous span of years, in preserving their basic identity. They could not have done so unless they were in harmony with life and nature. Whatever it was that kept them to a large extent to their ancient moorings, it was a thing of power or it could not have survived for so long. Possibly it exhausted its utility long ago and has been a drag and a hindrance ever since, or it may be that the accretions of later ages have smothered the good in it and only the empty shell of the fossil remains.

There is perhaps a certain conflict always between the idea of progress and that of security and stability. The two do not fit in, the former wants change, the latter a safe unchanging haven and a continuation of things as they are. The idea of progress is modern and relatively new even in the West; the ancient and medieval civilizations thought far more in terms of a golden past and of subsequent decay. In India also the past has always been glorified. The civilization that was built up here was essentially based on stability and security, and from this point of view it was far more successful than any

that arose in the West. The social structure, based on the caste system and joint families, served this purpose and was successful in providing social security for the group and a kind of insurance for the individual who by reason of age, infirmity, or any other incapacity was unable to provide for himself. Such an arrangement, while favouring the weak, hinders, to some extent, the strong. It encourages the average type at the cost of the abnormal, the bad or the gifted. It levels up or down, and individualism has less play in it. It is interesting to note that while Indian philosophy is highly individualistic and deals almost entirely with the individual's growth to some kind of inner perfection, the Indian social structure was communal and paid attention to groups only. The individual was allowed perfect freedom to think and believe what he liked, but he had to conform strictly to social and communal usage.

So long as stability and security were the chief ends in view, this structure functioned more or less successfully, and even when economic changes undermined it, there was a process of adaptation and it continued. The real challenge to it came from the new dynamic conception of social progress, which could not be fitted into the old static ideas. It is this conception that is uprooting old-established systems in the East as it has done in the West. In the West, while progress is still the dominant note, there is a growing demand for security. In India the very lack of security has forced people out of their old ruts and made them think in terms of a progress that will give security.

In ancient and medieval India, however, there was no such challenge of progress. But the necessity for change and continuous adaptation was recognized and hence grew a passion for synthesis. It was a synthesis not only of the various elements that came into India, but also an attempt at a synthesis between the outer and inner life of the individual, between man and nature. There were no such wide gaps and cleavages as seem to exist today. This common cultural background created India and gave it an impress of unity in spite of its diversity. At the root of the political structure was the self-governing village system, which endured at the base

while kings came and went. Fresh migrations from outside and invaders merely ruffled the surface of this structure without touching those roots. The power of the State, however despotic in appearance, was curbed in a hundred ways by customary and constitutional restraints, and no ruler could easily interfere with the rights and privileges of the village community. These customary rights and privileges ensured a measure of freedom for both the community and the individual.

Among the people of India today none are more typically Indian or prouder of Indian culture and tradition than the Rajputs. Yet many of the Rajputs are said to be descended from the Indo-Scythians, and some from the Huns who came to India. There is no sturdier or finer peasant in India than the Jat, wedded to the soil and brooking no interference with his land. He also has a Scythian origin. And so too the Kathi, the tall, handsome peasant of Kathiawar. But whatever the origin might have been, all of them have become distinctively Indian, participating jointly with others in India's culture and looking back on her past traditions as their own.

It would seem that every outside element that has come to India, and been absorbed by India, has given something to India and taken much from her; it has contributed to its own and to India's strength. But where it has kept apart, or been unable to become a sharer and participant in India's life, and her rich and diverse culture, it has had no lasting influence, and has ultimately faded away, sometimes injuring itself and India in the process.

6 : India and Iran

Among the many peoples and races who have come in contact with and influenced India's life and culture, the oldest and most persistent have been the Iranians. Indeed the relationship precedes even the beginnings of Indo-Aryan civilization, for it was out of some common stock that the Indo-Aryans and the ancient Iranians diverged and took their different ways. Racially connected, their old religions and languages also had a

common background. The Vedic religion had much in common with Zoroastrianism, and Vedic Sanskrit and the old Pahlavi, the language of the *Avesta*, closely resemble each other. Classical Sanskrit and Persian developed separately but many of their root-words were common, as some are common to all the Aryan languages. The two languages, and even more so their art and culture, were influenced by their respective environments. Persian art appears to be intimately connected with the soil and scenery of Iran, and to that probably is due the persistence of Iran's artistic tradition. So also the Indo-Aryan artistic tradition and ideals grew out of the snow-covered mountains, rich forests, and great rivers of North India.

Iran, like India, was strong enough in her cultural foundations to influence even her invaders and often to absorb them. The Arabs, who conquered Iran in the seventh century A.C., soon succumbed to this influence and, in place of their simple desert ways, adopted the sophisticated culture of Iran. The Persian language, like French in Europe, became the language of cultured people across wide stretches of Asia. Iranian art and culture spread from Constantinople in the West right up to the edge of the Gobi Desert.

In India this Iranian influence was continuous, and during the Afghan and Moghul periods in India, Persian was the court language of the country. This lasted right up to the beginning of the British period. All the modern Indian languages are full of Persian words. India has produced in the past some brilliant poets in the Persian language, and even today there are many fine scholars of Persian, both Hindu and Moslem.

There seems to be little doubt that the Indus Valley civilization had some contacts with the contemporaneous civilization of Iran and Mesopotamia. India is mentioned in the *Avesta* and there is also some kind of a description of North India in it. In the *Rigveda* there are references to Persia—the Persians were called *Parshavas* and later *Parasikas,* from which the modern word Parsi is derived.

Contacts with India continued and Ashoka's buildings, it is said, were influenced by the architecture of

Persepolis. The Graeco-Buddhist art that developed in North-West India and Afghanistan has also the touch of Iran.

The borderland areas of Kabul, Kandahar, and Seistan, which were often politically parts of India, were the meeting-place of Indians and Iranians. In later Parthian times they were called 'White India'.

The Moghul rulers of India kept up the closest of contacts with Iran and there was a stream of scholars and artists coming over the frontier to seek fame and fortune at the brilliant court of the Great Moghul.

A new architecture developed in India, a combination of Indian ideals and Persian inspiration, and Delhi and Agra were covered with noble and beautiful buildings. Of the most famous of these, the Taj Mahal, M. Grousset, the French savant, said that it is 'the soul of Iran incarnate in the body of India'.

Unfortunately the last memory we have of this long, intimate and honourable association is that of Nadir Shah's invasion, a brief but terrible visitation two hundred years ago.

Then came the British and they barred all the doors and stopped all the routes that connected us with our neighbours in Asia. New routes were opened across the seas which brought us nearer to Europe, and more particularly England, but there were to be no further contacts overland between India and Iran and Central Asia and China till, in the present age, the development of the airways made us renew the old companionship. This sudden isolation from the rest of Asia has been one of the most remarkable and unfortunate consequences of British rule in India.

There has, however, been one continuing bond, not with Iran of modern times but with old Iran. Thirteen hundred years ago, when Islam came to Iran, some hundreds or thousands of the followers of the old Zoroastrian faith migrated to India. They found a welcome here and settled down on the western coast. It is remarkable how the Parsis, as they have been called, have quietly and unostentatiously fitted into India, made it their home, and yet kept quite apart as a small community, tenaciously holding on to their old customs.

World developments and common interests are forcing Asiatic countries to look at each other again. The period of European domination is passed over as a bad dream and memories of long ago remind them of old friendships and common adventures. There can be no doubt that in the near future India will draw closer to Iran, as she is doing to China.

Two months ago the leader of an Iranian Cultural Mission to India said in the city of Allahabad: 'The Iranians and Indians are like two brothers who, according to a Persian legend, had got separated from each other, one going east the other to the west. Their families had forgotten all about each other and the only thing that remained in common between them were the snatches of a few old tunes which they still played on their flutes. It was through these tunes that, after a lapse of centuries, the two families recognized each other and were reunited.'

7 : *India and Greece*

Ancient Greece is supposed to be the fountainhead of European civilization and much has been written about the fundamental difference between the Orient and the Occident. I do not understand this; a great deal of it seems to me to be vague and unscientific, without much basis in fact. Till recently many European thinkers imagined that everything that was worthwhile had its origin in Greece or Rome. Sir Henry Maine has said somewhere that, except the blind forces of nature, nothing moves in this world which is not originally Greek. European classical scholars, deeply learned in Greek and Latin lore, knew very little about India and China. Yet Professor E. R. Dodds emphasizes the 'Oriental background against which Greek culture rose, and from which it was never completely isolated save in the minds of classical scholars'.

If scholars believed so, much more so did the unread crowd believe in some essential differences between the East and the West. The industrialization of Europe and

the consequent material progress impressed this difference still further on the popular mind, and by an odd process of rationalization ancient Greece became the father or mother of modern Europe and America. Additional knowledge of the past of the world shook these conclusions in the minds of a few thinkers, but so far as the mass of the people were concerned, intellectuals and non-intellectuals, the centuries-old ideas continued, phantoms floating about in the upper layer of their consciousness and fading away into the landscape they had fashioned for themselves.

There is no organic connexion between Hellenic civilization and modern European and American civilization. The modern notion that the really important thing is to be comfortable is entirely foreign to the ideas underlying Greek or any other ancient literature. Greeks and Indians and Chinese and Iranians were always seeking a religion and a philosophy of life which affected all their activities and which were intended to produce an equilibrium and a sense of harmony. This ideal emerges in every aspect of life—in literature, art, and institutions—and it produces a sense of proportion and completeness. Probably these impressions are not wholly justified and the actual conditions of life may have been very different. But even so, it is important to remember how far removed are modern Europe and America from the whole approach and outlook of the Greeks, whom they praise so much in their leisure moments, and with whom they seek some distant contacts, in order to satisfy some inner yearning of their hearts, or find some oasis in the harsh and fiery deserts of modern existence.

Every country and people has had an individuality, a message, and has attempted to solve life's problems in its own way. Each of them developed in accordance with its racial genius, influenced by its natural environment, and emphasized some one aspect of life more than others. This emphasis varied. The Greeks, as a race, may have lived more in the present and found joy and harmony in the beauty they saw around them or which they themselves created. The Indians found this joy and harmony also in the present but, at the same time,

their eyes were turned towards deeper knowledge and their minds trafficked with strange questions. The Chinese, fully aware of these questions and their mystery, in their wisdom avoided entanglement with them. History has shown that India and China had stronger foundations and greater staying power. Old Greece, for all its brilliance, had a short life ; it did not survive except in its splendid achievements, its influence on succeeding cultures, and the memory of that short bright day of abundant life. Perhaps because it was too much engrossed in the present, it became the past.

India is far nearer in spirit and outlook to the old Greece than the nations of Europe are today, although they call themselves children of the Hellenic spirit. We are apt to forget this because we have inherited fixed concepts which prevent reasoned thought.

Geographically and climatically Greece is different from India. There are no real rivers there, no forests, no big trees, which abound in India. The sea with its immensity and changing moods affected the Greeks far more than it did the Indians, except perhaps those who lived near India's coastline. India's life was more continental, of vast plains and huge mountains, of mighty rivers and great forests. There were some mountains in Greece also, and the Greeks chose Olympus as the abode of the gods, just as the Indians placed their gods and even their sages on the Himalayan heights. Both developed a mythology which was indivisibly mixed up with history, and it was not possible to separate fact from fiction. The old Greeks are said to have been neither pleasure-seekers nor ascetics ; they did not avoid pleasure as something evil and immoral, nor did they go out deliberately to amuse themselves as modern people are apt to do. Without the inhibitions which afflict so many of us, they took life in their stride, applying themselves wholly to whatever they did, and thus somehow they appear to have been more alive than we are. Some such impression one gathers of life in India also from our old literature. There was an ascetic aspect of life in India, as there was later in Greece, but it was confined to a limited number of people and did not affect life generally. That aspect was to grow more

important under the influence of Jainism and Buddhism, but even so it did not change materially the background of life.

Life was accepted as it was and lived fully both in India and Greece; nevertheless, there was a belief in the supremacy of some kind of inner life. This led to curiosity and speculation, but the spirit of inquiry was not so much directed towards objective experience as to logical reasoning fixed on certain concepts which were accepted as obviously true. That indeed was the general attitude everywhere before the advent of the scientific method. Probably this speculation was confined to a small number of intellectuals, yet even the ordinary citizens were influenced by it and discussed philosophical problems, as they did everything else, in their public meeting-places.

And yet Hellenism has among its many splendid achievements one that is even more unique than others, the early beginnings of experimental science. There is nothing to compare with this in India, or, for the matter of that, anywhere else till science again took a big stride from the seventeenth century onwards. Even Rome for all its empire and the Pax Romana over a considerable area, its close contacts with Hellenic civilization, its opportunities to draw upon the learning and experiences of many peoples, made no significant contribution to science, invention, or mechanical development. After the collapse of classical civilization in Europe, it was the Arabs who kept the flame of scientific knowledge alight through the Middle Ages.

This burst of scientific activity in Alexandria was no doubt the social product of the time, called forth by the needs of a growing society and of seafaring, just as the advance in arithmetic and algebraic methods, the use of the zero sign and the place-value system in India were also due to social needs, advancing trade and more complex organization. But it is doubtful how far the scientific spirit was present in the old Greeks as a whole and their life must have followed traditional patterns, based on their old philosophic approach seeking an integration and harmony in man and with nature. It is that approach which is common to old Greece and India.

There is no seclusion of women in ancient India except to some extent among royalty and the nobility. Probably there was more segregation of the sexes in Greece than in India then. Women of note and learning are frequently mentioned in the old Indian books, and often they took part in public debates. Marriage, in Greece, was apparently wholly a contractual affair; but in India it has always been considered a sacramental union, though other forms are mentioned.

Greek women were apparently especially welcomed in India. Often the maids-in-waiting at royal courts mentioned in the old plays are Greek. Among the noted imports from Greece into India were, it is said, ‘singing boys and pretty maidens’. Some of the wine certainly came from Grecian lands or colonies, for an old Tamil poet refers to ‘the cool and fragrant wine brought by the Yavanas (Ionians or Greeks) in their good ships’. A Greek account relates that the king of Pataliputra (probably Ashoka’s father, Bindusara) wrote to Antiochus asking him to buy and send him sweet wine, dried figs, and a Sophist philosopher. Antiochus replied: ‘We shall send you the figs and wine, but in Greece the laws forbid a Sophist to be sold.’

It is clear from Greek literature that homosexual relations were not looked upon with disfavour. Indeed there was a romantic approval of them. Possibly this was due to the segregation of the sexes in youth. A similar attitude is found in Iran, and Persian literature is full of such references. It appears to have become an established literary form and convention to represent the beloved as a male companion. There is no such thing in Sanskrit literature and homosexuality was evidently neither approved nor at all common in India.

There is a tradition recorded in some Greek book that learned Indians visited Socrates and put questions to him. Pythagoras was particularly influenced by Indian philosophy, and Professor H. G. Rawlinson remarks that ‘almost all the theories, religious, philosophical, and mathematical, taught by the Pythagorians were known in India in the sixth century B.C.’. A European classical scholar, Urwick, has based his interpretation of *The*

Republic of Plato upon Indian thought.[1] Gnosticism is supposed to be a definite attempt to fuse together Greek Platonic and Indian elements. The philosopher Apollonius of Tyana probably visited the university of Taxila in North-West India about the beginning of the Christian era.

Though inevitably influencing each other, Greek and Indian civilizations were each strong enough to hold their own and develop on their distinctive lines. 'Considered broadly,' says Professor Tarn, 'what the Asiatic took from the Greek was usually externals only, matters of form; he rarely took the substance—civic institutions may have been an exception—and never spirit. For in matters of spirit Asia was quite confident that she could outstay the Greeks, and she did.' Again: 'Except for the Buddha statue the history of India would in all essentials have been precisely what it has been, had the Greeks never existed.'

It is an interesting thought that image-worship came to India from Greece. The Vedic religion was opposed to all forms of idol and image worship. There were not even any temples for the gods. There probably were some traces of image worship in the older faiths in India, though this was certainly not widely prevalent. Early Buddhism was strongly opposed to it and there was a special prohibition against the making of images and statues of the Buddha. But Greek artistic influence in Afghanistan and round about the frontier was strong and gradually it had its way. Even so, no statues of the Buddha were made to begin with, but Apollo-like statues of the Bodhisattvas (supposed to be the previous incarnations of the Buddha) appeared. These were followed by statues and images of the Buddha himself. This encouraged image-worship in some forms of Hinduism though not in the Vedic religion, which continued to be free of it. The word for an image or statue in Persian and in Hindustani still is *but* (like put), derived from Buddha.

The human mind appears to have a passion for finding

[1] Zimmern in his *The Greek Commonwealth*, p. 446, refers to Urwick's book, *The Message of Plato*.

out some kind of unity in life, in nature and the universe, and the search for unity in India, Greece, and elsewhere, yielded positive results and produced a harmony, a balance, and a richness in life. It is true that the tremendous inertia of age and size have weighed India down, degrading custom and evil practice have eaten into her, many a parasite has clung to her and sucked her blood, but behind all this lie the strength of ages and the subconscious wisdom of an ancient race. For we are very old, and trackless centuries whisper in our ears. It is not some secret doctrine or esoteric knowledge that has kept India vital and going through those long ages, but a tender humanity, a varied and tolerant culture, and a deep understanding of life and its mysterious ways.

8 : The Old Indian Theatre

The discovery by Europe of the old Indian drama led immediately to suggestions that it had its origin in, or had been greatly influenced by, Greek drama. There was some plausibility in the theory, for till then no other ancient drama had been known to exist. It is now generally admitted that the Indian theatre was entirely independent in its origins, in the ideas which governed it, and in its development. Its earliest beginnings can be traced back to the hymns and dialogues of the *Rigveda* which have a certain dramatic character. There are references to *nātaka,* or the drama, in the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata.* It began to take shape in the songs and music and dances of the Krishna legends. Panini, the great grammarian of the sixth or seventh century B.C., mentions some dramatic forms.

A treatise on the Art of the Theatre—the *Nātya-shāstra*—is said to date from the third century A.C. Such a book could only be written when the dramatic art was fully developed and public representations were common. A considerable literature must have preceded it, and behind it must lie many centuries of gradual progress. It is significant that a playhouse of the second century B.C. unearthed in the Ramgarh Hills in Chota

Nagpur fits in with the general description of theatres given in the *Nātyashāstra*.

It is now believed that the regular Sanskrit drama was fully established by the third century B.C., though some scholars take the date back to the fifth century. Early in this century a bunch of thirteen plays belonging to Bhasa was discovered. Probably the earliest Sanskrit plays, so far discovered, are those of Ashvaghosa, who lived just before or after the beginning of the Christian era. These are really fragments only of manuscripts on palm-leaves, and they were discovered, strangely enough, at Turfan on the borders of the Gobi Desert. Ashvaghosa was a pious Buddhist and wrote also the well-known and popular *Buddha Charita*, a life of the Buddha.

Europe first learned of the old Indian drama from Sir William Jones's translation of Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, published in 1789. Something in the nature of a commotion was created among European intellectuals by this discovery and several editions of the book followed. Translations also appeared (made from Sir William Jones's translation) in German, French, Danish, and Italian. Goethe was powerfully impressed and he paid a magnificent tribute to *Shakuntala*. The idea of giving a prologue to *Faust* is said to have originated from Kalidasa's prologue, which was in accordance with the usual tradition of the Sanskrit drama.

Kalidasa is acknowledged to be the greatest poet and dramatist of Sanskrit literature. Tradition says that he was one of the nine gems of the court of Vikramaditya at Ujjaini and there is no doubt that his genius was appreciated and that he met with full recognition during his life. His writings betray his love of life and a passion for nature's beauty.

One of Kalidasa's long poems is the *Meghaduta*, the Cloud Messenger. A lover, made captive and separated from his beloved, asks a cloud, during the rainy season, to carry his message of desperate longing to her. To this poem and to Kalidasa, the American scholar Ryder has paid a splendid tribute. He refers to the two parts of the poem and says: 'The former half is a description of external nature, yet interwoven with human

feeling; the latter half is a picture of a human heart, yet the picture is framed in natural beauty. . . . Kalidasa understood in the fifth century what Europe did not learn until the nineteenth, and even now comprehends only imperfectly: that the world was not made for man, that man reaches his full stature only as he realizes the dignity and worth of life that is not human. That Kalidasa seized this truth is a magnificent tribute to his intellectual power, a quality quite as necessary to great poetry as perfection of form. Poetical fluency is not rare; intellectual grasp is not very uncommon; but the combination has not been found perhaps more than a dozen times since the world began.'

Probably long before Kalidasa, another famous play was produced—Shudraka's *Mrichhakatika* or The Clay Cart, a tender, rather artificial play, and yet with a reality which moves us and gives us a glimpse into the mind and civilization of the day.

Harsha, the king, who established a new empire early in the seventh century A.C., was also a playwright and we have three plays written by him. About 700 A.C., there lived Bhavabhuti, another shining star in Sanskrit literature. Wilson, who used to be professor of Sanskrit at Oxford University, has said of these two: 'It is impossible to conceive language so beautifully musical, or so magnificently grand, as that of the verses of Bhavabhuti and Kalidasa.'

The stream of Sanskrit drama continued to flow for centuries, but after Murari, early in the ninth century, there is a marked decline in the quality. The Sanskrit drama declined because much in India was declining in those days and the creative spirit was lessening. It declined long before the Afghans and Turks established themselves on the throne of Delhi. Subsequently Sanskrit had to compete to some extent as the learned language of the nobility with Persian. But one obvious reason appears to have been the ever-widening gap between the language of the Sanskrit drama and the languages of day-to-day life. By 1000 A.C. the popular spoken languages, out of which our modern languages have grown, were beginning to take literary forms.

Yet, in spite of all this, it is astonishing how the

Sanskrit drama continued to be produced right through the medieval period and up to recent times. In 1892 appeared a Sanskrit adaptation of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Manuscripts of old plays are continually being discovered. A list of these prepared by Professor Sylvain Lévi in 1890 contained 377 plays by 189 authors. A more recent list contains 650 plays.

The language of the old plays (of Kalidasa and others) is mixed—Sanskrit and one or more Prakrits, that is, popular variations of Sanskrit. In the same play educated people speak in Sanskrit and ordinary uneducated folk, usually women, though there are exceptions, in Prakrit. The poetical and lyrical passages, which abound, are in Sanskrit. This mixture probably brought the plays nearer to the average audience. It was a compromise between the literary language and the demands of a popular art.

But apart from this high-class literary theatre, there has always been a popular theatre based on stories from Indian mythology and the epics, themes well known to the audience, and concerned more with display than with any dramatic element. This was in the language of the people in each particular area and was therefore confined to that area. Sanskrit plays, on the other hand, being in the all-India language of the educated, had an all-India vogue.

These Sanskrit plays were undoubtedly meant for acting, and elaborate stage-directions are given, and rules for seating the audience. Unlike the practice in ancient Greece, actresses took part in the presentation. In both Greek and Sanskrit there is a sensitive awareness of nature and a feeling of being a part of that nature. There is a strong lyric element, and poetry seems to be an integral part of life, full of meaning and significance.

The essential basis of the Greek drama is tragedy, the problem of evil: Why does man suffer ? Why is there evil in the world ? The enigma of religion, of God. What a pitiful thing is man, child of a day, with his blind and aimless strivings against all-powerful fate !

There is nothing comparable to the power and majesty of Greek tragedy in Sanskrit. Indeed there is no

tragedy at all, for a tragic ending was not permitted. No such fundamental questions are discussed, for the commonly held patterns of religious faith were accepted by the dramatists. Among these were the doctrines of rebirth and cause and effect. Accident or evil without cause were ruled out, for what happens now is the necessary result of some previous happening in a former life. 'The ignorant rely on Providence,' says Chanakya contemptuously in the *Mudrā Rākshasa*, they look to the stars for help instead of relying on themselves. Some artificiality creeps in : the hero is always the hero, the villain almost always acts villainously ; there are few intermediate shades. Yet there are powerful dramatic situations and moving scenes and a background of life which seems like a picture in a dream, real and yet unreal, all woven together by a poet's fancy in magnificent language.

An English translation of Shudraka's *Mrichhakatika* was staged in New York in 1924. Mr Joseph Wood Krutch, the dramatic critic of the *Nation*, wrote of it as follows : 'Here, if anywhere, the spectator will be able to see a genuine example of that "pure art theatre" of which theorists talk, and here, too, he will be led to meditate upon that real wisdom of the East which lies not in esoteric doctrine but in a tenderness far deeper and truer than that of traditional Christianity.'

9 : *The Vitality and Persistence of Sanskrit*

Sanskrit is a language amazingly rich, efflorescent, full of luxuriant growth of all kinds, and yet precise and strictly keeping within the framework of grammar which Panini laid down two thousand six hundred years ago. In the years of the decline of Sanskrit literature, it lost some of its power and simplicity of style and became involved in highly complex forms and elaborate similes and metaphors. The grammatical rule which enabled words to be joined together, became in the hands of the epigones a mere device to show off their cleverness by combining whole strings of words running into many lines.

Sir William Jones observed as long ago as 1784 : 'The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure ; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin and more exquisitely refined than either.'[1] It is to German scholars of the nineteenth century that the greatest credit must go for research in Sanskrit. Practically every German university had a Sanskrit department, with one or two professors in charge of it. Indian scholarship, which was considerable, was of the old style, uncritical and seldom acquainted with foreign classical languages, except Arabic and Persian. A new type of scholarship arose in India under European inspiration, and many Indians went to Europe (usually to Germany) to train themselves in the new methods of research and critical and comparative study. These Indians had an advantage over the Europeans, and yet there was a disadvantage also. This disadvantage was due to certain preconceived notions, inherited beliefs and tradition, which came in the way of dispassionate criticism. The advantage, and it was great, was the capacity to enter into the spirit of the writing, to picture the environment in which it grew and thus to be more in tune with it.

A language is something infinitely greater than grammar and philology. It is the poetic testament of the genius of a race and a culture, and the living embodiment of the thoughts and fancies that have moulded them. Words change their meanings from age to age and old ideas transform themselves into new, often keeping their old attire. It is difficult to capture the meaning, much less the spirit, of an old word or phrase. Some kind of a romantic and poetical approach is necessary if we are to have a glimpse into that old meaning and into the minds of those who used the language in former days.

So while the study of comparative philology has progressed and much research work has been done in Sanskrit, it is rather barren and sterile from the point of view of a poetic and romantic approach to this language. There is hardly any translation in English

[1] *Works of Sir William Jones*, Vol. III, p. 34.

or any other foreign language from the Sanskrit which can be called worthy of, or just to, the original. Both Indians and foreigners have failed in this work for different reasons. That is a great pity and the world misses something that is full of beauty and imagination and deep thinking, something that is not merely the heritage of India but should be the heritage of the human race.

The hard discipline, reverent approach, and insight of the English translators of the Authorized Version of the Bible, not only produced a noble book, but gave to the English language strength and dignity. Generations of European scholars and poets have laboured lovingly over Greek and Latin classics and produced fine translations in various European languages. And so even common folk can share to some extent in those cultures and, in their drab lives, have glimpses of truth and loveliness. Unfortunately, this work has yet to be done with the Sanskrit classics. When it will be done, or whether it will be done at all, I do not know. Our scholars grow in numbers and grow in scholarship, and we have our poets too, but between the two there is a wide and ever-growing gap. Scholars give us plenty of notes and explanations and comparisons. Everything, in fact, is literally and conscientiously rendered, only the living spirit is missing. What was a thing of life and joy, so lovely and musical and full of imaginative daring, has become old and flat and stale, with neither youth nor beauty, but with only the dust of the scholar's study and the smell of midnight oil.

For how long Sanskrit has been a dead language, in the sense of not being popularly spoken, I do not know. Even in the days of Kalidasa it was not the people's language, though it was the language of educated people throughout India. So it continued for centuries, and even spread to the Indian colonies in South-East Asia and Central Asia. There are records of regular Sanskrit recitations, and possibly plays also, in Cambodia in the seventh century A.C. Sanskrit is still used for some ceremonial purposes in Thailand. In India the vitality of Sanskrit has been amazing. When the Afghan rulers had established themselves on the throne of Delhi, about

the beginning of the thirteenth century, Persian became the court language over the greater part of India and, gradually, many educated people took to it in preference to Sanskrit. The popular languages also grew and developed literary forms. Yet in spite of all this Sanskrit continued, though it declined in quality.

Simple spoken Sanskrit is not very difficult to follow for those who know well any of the present-day Indo-Aryan languages—Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, etc. Even present-day Urdu, itself wholly an Indo-Aryan language, probably contains 80 per cent words derived from Sanskrit. Curiously enough, the Dravidian languages of the south, though entirely different in origin, have borrowed and adopted such masses of words from the Sanskrit that nearly half their vocabulary is very nearly allied to Sanskrit.

The ancient Indians attached a great deal of importance to sound, and hence their writing, poetry or prose, had a rhythmic and musical quality. Special efforts were made to ensure the correct enunciation of words and elaborate rules were laid down for this purpose. This became all the more necessary as, in the old days, teaching was oral, and while books were committed to memory and thus handed down from generation to generation. The significance attached to the sound of words led to attempts to co-ordinate the sense with the sound, resulting sometimes in delightful combinations, and at other times in crude and artificial mixtures.

The language of Ceylon is Singhalese. This is also an Indo-Aryan language derived directly from Sanskrit. The Singhalese people have not only got their religion, Buddhism, from India, but are racially and linguistically akin to Indians.

Sanskrit, it is now well recognized, is allied to the European classical and modern languages. Even the Slavonic languages have many common forms and roots with Sanskrit. The nearest approach to Sanskrit in Europe is made by the Lithuanian language.

10 : How did Hinduism absorb Buddhism in India?

Eight or nine years ago, when I was in Paris, André Malraux put me a strange question at the very beginning of our conversation. What was it, he asked me, that enabled Hinduism to push away organized Buddhism from India, without any major conflict, over a thousand years ago ? How did Hinduism succeed in absorbing, as it were, a great and widespread popular religion, without the usual wars of religion which disfigure the history of so many countries ? What inner vitality or strength did Hinduism possess then which enabled it to perform this remarkable feat ? And did India possess this inner vitality and strength today ? If so, then her freedom and greatness were assured.

But I had no satisfactory answer to it for him or for myself. There are answers and explanations enough, but they seem to miss the core of the problem.

It is clear that there was no widespread or violent extermination of Buddhism in India. Occasionally there were local troubles or conflicts between a Hindu ruler and the Buddhist *Sangha*, or organization of monks, which had grown powerful. These had usually a political origin and they did not make any essential difference. It must also be remembered that Hinduism was at no time wholly displaced by Buddhism. Even when Buddhism was at its height in India, Hinduism was widely prevalent. Buddhism died a natural death in India, or rather it was a fading-out and a transformation into something else. 'India', says Keith, 'has a strange genius for converting what it borrows and assimilating it.' Buddhism was not only entirely a product of India; its philosophy was in line with previous Indian thought and the philosophy of the Vedanta (the *Upanishads*). The *Upanishads* had even ridiculed priestcraft and ritualism and minimized the importance of caste.

Brahminism and Buddhism acted and reacted on each other, and in spite of their dialectical conflicts or because of them, approached nearer to each other, both in the

realm of philosophy and that of popular belief. The Mahayana especially approached the Brahminical system and forms. Brahminism made of Buddha an *avatar*, a god. So did Buddhism. Magic and superstition crept into the popular forms of worship. There was a progressive degeneration of Buddhism in India after the first millennium of its existence.

Buddhism had started at a time of social and spiritual revival and reform in India. It infused the breath of a new life in the people, it tapped new sources of popular strength and released new talent and capacity for leadership. Under the imperial patronage of Ashoka it spread rapidly and became the dominant religion of India. It spread also to other countries and there was a constant stream of learned Buddhist scholars going abroad from India and coming to India. This stream continued for many centuries.

Meanwhile there had been a revival of Brahminism and a great cultural renaissance under the Imperial Guptas in the fourth and fifth centuries A.C. This was not anti-Buddhist in any way but it certainly increased the importance and power of Brahminism, and it was also a reaction against the other-worldliness of Buddhism. But both Brahminism and Buddhism deteriorated and degrading practices grew up in them. It became difficult to distinguish the two. If Brahmanism absorbed Buddhism, this process changed Brahminism also in many ways.

In the eighth century Shankaracharya, one of the greatest of India's philosophers, started religious orders or *maths* for Hindu *sanyāsins* or monks. This was an adoption of the old Buddhist practice of the *Sangha*. Previously there had been no such organizations of *sanyāsins* in Brahminism, although small groups of them existed.

11 : The Indian Philosophical Approach

Though one thought leads to another, each usually related to life's changing texture, and a logical movement of the human mind is sometimes discernible, yet

thoughts overlap and the new and the old run side by side, irreconcilable and often contradicting each other. Even an individual's mind is a bundle of contradictions and it is difficult to reconcile his actions one with another. It is astonishing to find in countries industrially advanced, where every person automatically uses or takes advantage of the latest modern discovery or device, beliefs and set ideas which reason denies and intelligence cannot accept. A politician may of course succeed in his business without being a shining example of reason or intelligence. A lawyer may be a brilliant advocate and jurist and yet be singularly ignorant of other matters. Even a scientist, that typical representative of the modern age, often forgets the method and outlook of science when he goes out of his study or laboratory.

This is so even in regard to the problems that affect our daily lives in their material aspects. In philosophy and metaphysics the problems are more remote, less transient and less connected with our day's routine. And yet all of us have some kind of philosophy of life, conscious or unconscious. Or we may seek refuge from the perils of thought in faith, in some religious creed or dogma, or in national destiny, or in a vague and comforting humanitarianism. Often all these and others are present together, though with little to connect them, and we develop split personalities, each functioning in its separate compartment.

Probably there was more unity and harmony in the human personality in the old days, though this was at a lower level than today, except for certain individuals who were obviously of a very high type. We cling still to the ways of dogmatic religion, adhere to outworn practices and beliefs, and yet talk and presume to live in terms of the scientific method.

But the problem is a more difficult and complex one now, for it has grown beyond the limits of the human personality. It was perhaps easier to develop some kind of a harmonious personality in the restricted spheres of ancient and medieval times. In that little world of town and village, with fixed concepts of social organization and behaviour, the individual and the group lived their

self-contained lives, protected, as a rule, from outer storms. Today the sphere of even the individual has grown world-wide, and different concepts of social organization conflict with each other and behind them are different philosophies of life. A strong wind arising somewhere creates a cyclone in one place and an anti-cyclone in another. So if harmony is to be achieved by the individual, it has to be supported by some kind of social harmony throughout the world.

In India, far more so than elsewhere, the old concept of social organization, and the philosophy of life underlying it, have persisted, to some extent, to the present day. They could not have done so unless they had some virtue which stabilized society and made it conform to life's conditions. And they would not have failed ultimately and become a drag and a hindrance, divorced from life, if the evil in them had not overcome that virtue. But, in any event, they cannot be considered today as isolated phenomena ; they must be viewed in that world context and made to harmonize with it.

'In India,' says Havell, 'religion is hardly a dogma, but a working hypothesis of human conduct, adapted to different stages of spiritual development and different conditions of life.' A dogma might continue to be believed in, isolated from life, but a working hypothesis of human conduct must work and conform to life, or it obstructs life. The very *raison d'être* of such a hypothesis is its workableness, its conformity to life, and its capacity to adapt itself to changing conditions. So long as it can do so it serves its purpose and performs its allotted function. When it goes off at a tangent from the curve of life, loses contact with social needs, and the distance between it and life grows, it loses all its vitality and significance. In India, philosophy, though in its higher reaches confined to the elect, has been more pervasive than elsewhere and has had a strong influence in moulding the national outlook and in developing a certain distinctive attitude of mind.

Buddhist philosophy played an important part in this process and, during the medieval period, Islam left its impress upon the national outlook, directly as well as indirectly. But, in the main, the dominating influence

has been that of the six systems of Indian philosophy, or *darshanas,* as they are called. Some of these systems were themselves greatly affected by Buddhist thought. All of them are considered orthodox and yet they vary in their approach and their conclusions, though they have many common ideas. There is polytheism, and theism with a personal God, and pure monism, and a system which ignores God altogether and bases itself on a theory of evolution. There is both idealism and realism. The various facets of the complex and inclusive Indian mind are shown in their unity and diversity.

There is a common presumption in all of them : that the universe is orderly and functions according to law, that there is a mighty rhythm about it. Some such presumption becomes necessary, for otherwise there could hardly be any system to explain it. Though the law of cause and effect functions, yet there is a measure of freedom for the individual to shape his own destiny. There is belief in rebirth and an emphasis on unselfish love and disinterested activity. Logic and reason are relied upon and used effectively for argument, but it is recognized that often intuition is greater than either. Professor Keith has pointed out that 'the systems are indeed orthodox and admit the authority of the sacred scriptures, but they attack the problems of existence with human means, and scripture serves for all practical purposes but to lend sanctity to results which are achieved not only without its aid, but often in very dubious harmony with its tenets'.

12 : The Six Systems of Philosophy

The early beginnings of the Indian systems of philosophy take us back to the pre-Buddhist era. They develop gradually, the Brahminical systems side by side with the Buddhist, often criticizing each other, often borrowing from one another. Before the beginning of the Christian era, six Brahminical systems had taken shape and crystallized themselves, out of the welter of many such systems. Each one of them represents an independent approach, a separate argument, and yet they were not

isolated from each other but were rather parts of a larger plan.

The six systems are known as: (1) *Nyāya*, (2) *Vaiseshika*, (3) *Sāmkhya*, (4) *Yoga*, (5) *Mimāmsā*, and (6) *Vedānta*.

The Nyaya method is analytic and logical. In fact *nyāya* means logic or the science of right reasoning. It is similar in many ways to Aristotle's syllogisms, though there are also fundamental differences between the two. Modern education in India has discarded it, but wherever Sanskrit is taught in the old way, Nyaya is still an essential part of the curriculum. It was not only considered an indispensable preparation for the study of philosophy, but a necessary mental training for every educated person.

The method was, of course, very different from the modern scientific method of objective investigation. Nevertheless it tried to examine the objects of knowledge critically and to proceed step by step by methods of logical proof. There was some faith behind it, certain presumptions which were not capable of logical treatment. Having accepted some hypotheses the system was built up on those foundations. It was presumed that there is a rhythm and unity in life and nature. There was belief in a personal God, in individual souls, and an atomic universe. The individual was neither the soul alone nor the body, but the product of their union. Reality was supposed to be a complex of souls and nature.

The Vaiseshika system resembles the Nyaya in many ways. It emphasizes the separateness of individual selves and objects, and develops the atomic theory of the universe. The principle of *dharma*, the moral law, is said to govern the universe, and round this the whole system revolves. The hypothesis of a god is not clearly admitted. On the whole both Nyaya and Vaiseshika adopt a realistic approach.

The Samkhya system, which Kapila (*c.* seventh century B.C.) is said to have shaped out of many early and pre-Buddhist currents of thought, is remarkable. According to Richard Garbe: 'In Kapila's doctrine, for the first time in the history of the world, the complete

independence and freedom of the human mind, its full confidence in its own powers, were exhibited.'

The Samkhya became a well co-ordinated system after the rise of Buddhism. Like Buddhism, Samkhya proceeded along rationalistic lines of inquiry and met the challenge of Buddhism on the latter's own ground of reasoned argument without support of authority. Because of this rationalistic approach, God had to be ruled out. In Samkhya thus there is neither a personal God nor an impersonal one, neither monotheism nor monism. Its approach was atheistic and it undermined the foundations of a supernatural religion. There is no creation of the universe by a god, but rather a constant evolution, the product of interaction between spirit (*purusha*), or rather spirits, and matter (*prakriti*), though that matter itself is of the nature of energy. This evolution is a continuous process.

The Yoga system of Patanjali is essentially a method for the discipline of the body and the mind leading up to psychic and spiritual training. Patanjali crystallized this old system. Yoga is a word well known now in Europe and America, though little understood, and it is associated with quaint practices, more especially with sitting Buddha-like and gazing on one's navel or the tip of one's nose. Some people learning odd tricks of the body presume to become authorities on the subject in the West, and impress and exploit the credulous and the seekers after the sensational. The system is much more than these devices and is based on the psychological conception that by proper training of the mind certain higher levels of consciousness can be reached. It is meant to be a method for finding out things for oneself rather than a preconceived metaphysical theory of reality or of the universe. It is thus experimental and the most suitable conditions for carrying out the experiment are pointed out. Thus the adherents of the atheistic Samkhya philosophy may use this method. Buddhism developed its own forms of Yoga training, partly similar, partly different. Belief in God is no integral part of the system, but it is suggested that such belief in a personal God, and devotion to him, helps in concentrating the mind and thus serves a practical purpose.

The later stages of Yoga are supposed to lead to some kind of intuitive insight or to a condition of ecstasy, such as the mystics speak of. Whether this is some kind of higher mental state, opening the door to further knowledge, or is merely a kind of self-hypnosis, I do not know. Even if the former is possible, the latter certainly also happens, and it is well known that unregulated Yoga has sometimes led to unfortunate consequences so far as the mind of the person is concerned.

But before these final stages of meditation and contemplation are reached, there is the discipline of the body and mind to be practised. The body should be fit and healthy, supple and graceful, hard and strong. A number of bodily exercises are prescribed, as also ways of breathing, in order to have some control over it and normally to take deep and long breaths. 'Exercises' is the wrong word, for they involve no strenuous movement. They are rather postures—*āsanas* as they are called—and, properly done, they relax and tone up the body and do not tire it at all. This old and typical Indian method of preserving bodily fitness is rather remarkable when one compares it with the more usual methods involving rushing about, jerks, hops, and jumps which leave one panting, out of breath, and tired out. There is a poise in it and an unruffled calm even while it exercises the body. And because of this the *āsanas* are suited to any age and some of them can be performed even by the old.

There are a large number of these *āsanas*. For many years now I have practised a few simple selected ones. But I have not gone beyond the elementary stages of the body, and my mind continues to be an unruly member, misbehaving far too often.

The discipline of the body, which includes eating and drinking the right things and avoiding the wrong ones, is to be accompanied by what the Yoga system describes as ethical preparation. This includes non-violence, truthfulness, continence, etc.

All this is supposed to lead to a control of the senses; then comes contemplation and meditation, and finally intense concentration, which should lead to various kinds of intuition.

Vivekananda, one of the greatest of the modern exponents of Yoga and the Vedanta, has laid repeated stress on the experimental character of Yoga and on basing it on reason. 'No one of these Yogas gives up reason, no one asks you to be hoodwinked or to deliver your reason into the hands of priests of any type whatsoever. . . . Each one of them tells you to cling to your reason, to hold fast to it. . . . For it is better that mankind should become atheist by following reason than blindly believe in two hundred million gods on the authority of anybody. . . . Perhaps there are prophets, who have passed the limits of sense and obtained a glimpse of the beyond. We shall believe it only when we can do the same ourselves ; not before.' It is said that reason is not strong enough, that often it makes mistakes. If reason is weak why should a body of priests be considered any better guides ? Vivekananda's unceasing stress on reason and his refusal to take anything on trust derived from his passionate belief in the freedom of the mind and also because he had seen the evils of authority in his own country—'for I was born in a country where they have gone to the extreme of authority'. He interpreted—and he had the right to interpret—the old Yoga systems and the Vedanta accordingly. But, however much experiment and reason may be at the back of them, they deal with regions which are beyond the reach or even the understanding of the average man—a realm of psychical and psychological experiences entirely different from the world we know and are used to. Those experiments and experiences have certainly not been confined to India, and there is abundant evidence of them in the records of Christian mystics, Persian Sufis, and others. It is extraordinary how these experiences resemble each other, demonstrating, as Romain Rolland says, 'the universality and perennial occurrence of the great facts of religious experience, their close resemblance under the diverse costumes of race and time, attesting to the persistent unity of the human spirit'.[1]

[1] *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel*, by Romain Rolland (Advaita Ashrana, Almora, 1947), p. 384.—Ed.

Yoga, then, is an experimental system of probing into the psychical background of the individual and thus developing certain perceptions and a control of the mind. How far this can be utilized to advantage by modern psychology, I do not know; but some attempt to do so seems worth while.

The next system of philosophy is known as the Mimamsa. This is ritualistic and tends towards polytheism. Modern popular Hinduism as well as the Hindu Law have been largely influenced by this system and its rules which lay down the *dharma* or the scheme of right living as conceived by it. It might be noted that the polytheism of the Hindus is of a curious variety, for the *devas,* the shining ones or gods, for all their special powers, are supposed to be of a lower order of creation than man. Both the Hindus and Buddhists believe that human birth is the highest stage that the Being has reached on the road to self-realization. Even the *devas* can only achieve this freedom and realization through human birth.

Sixthly, and lastly in the series, comes the Vedanta system, which, arising out of the *Upanishads*, developed and took many shapes and forms, but was always based on a monistic philosophy of the universe. The *purusha* and *prakriti* of the Samkhya are not considered as independent substances but as modifications of a single reality—the Absolute. On the foundation of the early Vedanta, Shankara (or Shankaracharya) built a system which is called the *Advaita Vedānta* or non-dualist Vedanta. It is this philosophy which represents the dominating philosophic outlook of Hinduism today.

How the Absolute Soul, the *Atman*, pervades everything, how the one appears as the many, and yet retains its wholeness, for the Absolute is indivisible, all this cannot be accounted for by the processes of logical reasoning, for our minds are limited by the finite world. Finite individuals cannot imagine the infinite without limiting it; they can only form limited and objective conceptions of it. Yet even these finite forms and concepts rest ultimately in the infinite and Absolute. Hence the form of religion becomes a relative affair and each

individual has liberty to form such conceptions as he is capable of.

Shankara accepted the Brahminical organization of social life on the caste basis, as representing the collective experience and wisdom of the race. But he held that any person belonging to any caste could attain the highest knowledge.

There is about Shankara's attitude and philosophy a sense of world negation and withdrawal from the normal activities of the world in search for that freedom of the self which was to him the final goal for every person. There is also a continual insistence on self-sacrifice and detachment.

And yet Shankara was a man of amazing energy and vast activity. He was no escapist retiring into his shell or into a corner of the forest, seeking his own individual perfection and oblivious of what happened to others. Born in Malabar in the far south of India, he travelled incessantly all over India, meeting innumerable people, arguing, debating, reasoning, convincing, and filling them with a part of his own passion and tremendous vitality. He was evidently a man who was intensely conscious of his mission, a man who looked upon the whole of India from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas as his field of action and as something that held together culturally and was infused by the same spirit, though this might take many external forms. He strove hard to synthesize the diverse currents that were troubling the mind of the India of his day and to build a unity of outlook out of that diversity. In a brief life of thirty-two years he did the work of many long lives and left such an impress of his powerful mind and rich personality on India that it is very evident today. He was a curious mixture of a philosopher and a scholar, an agnostic and a mystic, a poet and a saint, and, in addition to all this, a practical reformer and an able organizer. He built up, for the first time within the Brahminical fold, ten religious orders, and of these four are very much alive today. He established four great *maths* or monasteries, locating them far from each other, almost at the four corners of India. One of these was in the south at Sringeri in Mysore, another at Puri on the east coast,

the third at Dvaraka in Kathiawar on the west coast, and the fourth at Badrinath in the heart of the Himalayas. At the age of thirty-two this Brahmin from the tropical South died at Kedarnath in the upper snow-covered reaches of the Himalayas.

There is a significance about these long journeys of Shankara throughout this vast land at a time when travel was difficult and the means of transport very slow and primitive. It would seem that Shankara wanted to add to the sense of national unity and common consciousness. He functioned on the intellectual, philosophical and religious plane and tried to bring about a greater unity of thought all over the country. He functioned also on the popular plane in many ways, destroying many a dogma and opening the door of his philosophic sanctuary to everyone who was capable of entering it. By locating his four great monasteries in the north, south, east, and west, he evidently wanted to encourage the conception of a culturally united India. These four places had been previously places of pilgrimage from all parts of the country, and now became more so.

How well the ancient Indians chose their sacred places of pilgrimage! Almost always they are lovely spots with beautiful natural surroundings. There is the icy cave of Amarnath in Kashmir, and there is the temple of the Virgin Goddess right at the southern tip of India at Rameshwaram, near Cape Comorin. There is Benares, of course, and Hardwar, nestling at the foot of the Himalayas, where the Ganga flows out of its tortuous mountain valleys into the plains below, and Prayaga (or Allahabad) where the Ganga meets the Jumna, and Mathura and Brindaban by the Jumna, round which the Krishna legends cluster, and Buddh Gaya where Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment, and so many places in the South. Many of the old temples, especially in the South, contain famous sculptures and other artistic remains. A visit to many of the places of pilgrimage thus gives an insight into old Indian art.

Shankara is said to have helped in putting an end to Buddhism in India as a widespread religion, so that

thereafter Brahminism absorbed it in a fraternal embrace. But Buddhism had shrunk in India even before Shankara's time. Some of Shankara's Brahmin opponents called him a disguised Buddhist. It is true that Buddhism influenced him considerably.

13 : India and China

It was through Buddhism that China and India came near to each other and developed many contacts. Whether there were any such contacts before Ashoka's reign we do not know; probably there was some sea-borne trade, for silk used to come from China. Yet there must have been overland contacts and migrations of peoples in far earlier periods, for Mongoloid features are common in the eastern border areas of India. In Nepal these are very marked. In Assam (*Kamarūpa* of old) and Bengal they are often evident. Historically speaking, however, Ashoka's missionaries blazed the trial and, as Buddhism spread in China, there began that long succession of pilgrims and scholars who journeyed between India and China for a thousand years.

The first record of an Indian scholar's visit to China is that of Kashyapa Matanga who reached China in 67 A.C. in the reign of the Emperor Ming Ti and probably at his invitation. He settled down at Lo Yang by the Lo river. Dharmaraksha accompanied him and, in later years, many noted scholars followed them. It is said that at one time (sixth century A.C.) there were more than 3,000 Indian Buddhist monks and 10,000 Indian families in the Lo Yang province alone.

These Indian scholars who went to China not only carried many Sanskrit manuscripts with them, which they translated into Chinese, but some of them also wrote original books in the Chinese language. They made quite a considerable contribution to Chinese literature, including poetry. Kumarajiva, who went to China in 401 A.C., was a prolific writer and as many as forty-seven different books written by him have come down to us. His Chinese style is supposed to be very good. He translated the life of the great Indian scholar

Nagarjuna into Chinese. Jinagupta went to China in the second half of the sixth century A.C. He translated thirty-seven original Sanskrit works into Chinese. His great knowledge was so much admired that an emperor of the T'ang dynasty become his disciple.

There was two-way traffic between India and China and many Chinese scholars came here. Among the best known, who have left records of their journeys, are Fa-hien (or Fa-hsien), Sung Yun, Hsuan-tsang (or Chwen Chuang), and I-tsing (or Yi-tsing). Fa-hsien came to India in the fifth century; he was a disciple of Kumarajiva in China. There is an interesting account of what Kumarajiva told him on the eve of his departure for India, when he went to take leave of his teacher. Kumarajiva charged him not to spend all his time in gathering religious knowledge only but to study in some detail the life and habits of the people of India, so that China might understand them and their country as a whole. Fa-hsien studied at Pataliputra University.

The most famous of the Chinese travellers to India was Hsuan-tsang who came in the seventh century when the great T'ang dynasty flourished in China and Harshavardhana ruled over an empire in North India. In India he travelled all over the country, greatly honoured and respected everywhere, making accurate observations of places and peoples, and noting down some delightful and some fantastic stories that he heard. Many years he spent at the great Nalanda University, not far from Pataliputra, which was famous for its many-sided learning and attracted students from far corners of the country. It is said that as many as 10,000 students and monks were in residence there. Hsuan-tsang took the degree of Master of the Law there and finally became vice-principal of the university.

Hsuan-tsang's book—the *Si-Yu-Ki* or the Record of the Western Kingdom (meaning India), makes fascinating reading. Coming from a highly civilized and sophisticated country, at a time when China's capital Si-an-fu was a centre of art and learning, his comments on and descriptions of conditions in India are valuable. He was particularly struck by the love of learning of the Indian people. Some kind of primary education was

fairly widespread, as all the monks and priests were teachers. Of the people he says : 'With respect to the ordinary people, although they are naturally light-minded, yet they are upright and honourable. In money matters they are without craft, and in administering justice they are considerate. . . . They are not deceitful or treacherous in their conduct, and are faithful in their oaths and promises. In their rules of government there is remarkable rectitude, whilst in their behaviour there is much gentleness and sweetness. With respect to criminals or rebels, these are few in number, and only occasionally troublesome.'

Hsuan-tsang went back to his homeland, welcomed by his Emperor and his people, and settled down to write his book and translate the many manuscripts he had brought. When he had started on his journey, many years earlier, there is a story that the Emperor T'ang mixed a handful of dust in a drink and offered this to him, saying : 'You would do well to drink this cup, for are we not told that a handful of one's country's soil is worth more than ten thousand pounds of foreign gold ?'

Hsuan-tsang's visit to India, and the great respect in which he was held both in China and in India, led to the establishment of political contacts between the rulers of the two countries. Harshavardhana of Kanauj and the T'ang Emperor exchanged embassies. Hsuan-tsang himself remained in touch with India, exchanging letters with friends there and receiving manuscripts. Two interesting letters, originally written in Sanskrit, have been preserved in China. One of these was written in 654 A.C. by an Indian Buddhist scholar, Sthavira Prajnadeva, to Hsuan-tsang. After greetings and news about common friends and their literary work, he proceeds to say : 'We are sending you a pair of white cloths to show that we are not forgetful. The road is long, so do not mind the smallness of the present. We wish you may accept it. As regards the *Sūtras* and *Shāstras* which you may require, please send us a list. We will copy them and send them to you.' Hsuan-tsang, in his reply, says : 'I learnt from an ambassador who recently came back from India that the great teacher Shailabhadra was no more. This news overwhelmed me with grief

that knew no bounds. . . . Among the *Sūtras* and *Shāstras* that I, Hsuan-tsang, had brought with me I have already translated the *Yogacharyabhumi-Shāstra* and other works, in all thirty volumes. I should humbly let you know that while crossing the Indus I had lost a load of sacred texts. I now send you a list of the texts annexed to this letter. I request you to send them to me if you get the chance. I am sending some small articles as presents. Please accept them.'

Soon after Hsuan-tsang's death in China, yet another famous Chinese pilgrim made the journey to India—I-tsing. He refers to India generally as the West (Si-fang), but he tells us that it was known as *Arya-desha*—'The *Aryadesha*; *arya* means "noble", *desha* "region", the Noble Region, a name for the West. It is so called because men of noble character appear there successively, and people all praise the land by that name. It is also called *Madhyadesha*, i.e. the Middle Land, for it is the centre of a hundred myriads of countries. The people are all familiar with this name. The northern tribes (Hu or Mongols or Turks) alone call the Noble Land "Hindu" (Hsin-tu), but this is not at all a common name; it is only a vernacular name, and has no special significance. The people of India do not know this designation, and the most suitable name for India is the "Noble Land".'

I-tsing, himself a fine scholar in Sanskrit, praises the language and says it is respected in far countries in the north and south. Sanskrit scholarship must have been fairly widespread in China. It is interesting to find that some Chinese scholars tried to introduce Sanskrit phonetics into the Chinese language. A well-known example of this is that of the monk Shou Wen, who lived at the time of the T'ang dynasty. He tried to develop an alphabetical system along these lines in Chinese.

With the decay of Buddhism in India this Indo-Chinese commerce of scholars practically ceased, though pilgrims from China occasionally came to visit the holy places of Buddhism in India. During the political revolutions from the eleventh century A.C. onwards, crowds of Buddhist monks, carrying bundles of manuscripts, went

to Nepal or crossed the Himalayas into Tibet. A considerable part of old Indian literature thus, and previously, found its way to China and Tibet, and in recent years it has been discovered afresh there in the original or, more frequently, in translations. Many Indian classics have been preserved in Chinese and Tibetan translations relating not only to Buddhism but also to Brahminism, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, etc. There are supposed to be 8,000 such works in the Sung-pao collection in China. Tibet is full of them. There used to be frequent co-operation between Indian, Chinese, and Tibetan scholars. A notable instance of this co-operation, still extant, is a Sanskrit-Tibetan-Chinese dictionary of Buddhist technical terms. This dates from the ninth or tenth century A.C. and is named the *Mahāvyutpatti*.

Among the most ancient printed books discovered in China, dating from the eighth century A.C., are books in Sanskrit. These were printed from wooden blocks. In the tenth century the Imperial Printing Commission was organized in China and as a result of this, and right up to the Sung era, the art of printing developed rapidly. It is surprising and difficult to account for the fact that, in spite of the close contacts between Indian and Chinese scholars and their exchanges of books and manuscripts for hundreds of years, there is no evidence whatever of the printing of books in India during that period. Block-printing went to Tibet from China at some early period and, I believe, it is still practised there. Chinese printing was introduced into Europe during the Mongol or Yuan dynasty (1260-1368). First known in Germany, it spread to other countries during the fifteenth century.

Even during the Indo-Afghan and Mughal periods in India there was occasional diplomatic intercourse between India and China. Mohammad bin Tughlak, Sultan of Delhi (1326-51), sent the famous Arab traveller, Ibn Batuta, as ambassador to the Chinese court. In the middle of the fourteenth century the Chinese court sent two ambassadors, Hu-shien and Fin-shien, to the Bengal Sultan. This led to a succession of ambassadors being sent from Bengal to China during Sultan Ghias-ud-Din's reign.

Trade between India and China, which had flourished during the Buddhist period, was continued throughout the Indo-Afghan and Moghul periods, and there was a continuous exchange of commodities.

During these thousand years and more of intercourse between India and China, each country learned something from the other, not only in the regions of thought and philosophy, but also in the arts and sciences of life. Probably China was more influenced by India than India by China, which is a pity, for India could well have received, with profit to herself, some of the sound common sense of the Chinese, and with its aid checked her own extravagant fancies. China took much from India but she was always strong and self-confident enough to take it in her own way and fit it in somewhere in her own texture of life. Even Buddhism and its intricate philosophy became tinged with the doctrines of Confucius and Lao-tze. The somewhat pessimistic outlook of Buddhist philosophy could not change or suppress the love of life and gaiety of the Chinese. There is an old Chinese proverb which says: 'If the Government gets hold of you, they'll flog you to death; if the Buddhists get hold of you, they'll starve you to death!'

After being cut off from each other for many centuries, India and China were brought by some strange fate under the influence of the British East India Company. India had to endure this for long; in China the contact was brief, but even so it brought opium and war.

And now the wheel of fate has turned full circle and again India and China look towards each other and past memories crowd in their minds; again pilgrims of a new kind cross or fly over the mountains that separate them, bringing their messages of cheer and goodwill and creating fresh bonds of a friendship that will endure.

14 : Indian Colonies and Culture in South-East Asia

To know and understand India one has to travel far in time and space, 'To know my country,' wrote Rabindranath Tagore, 'one has to travel to that age

when she realized her soul and thus transcended her physical boundaries, when she revealed her being in a radiant magnanimity . . . and not now when she has withdrawn herself into a narrow barrier of obscurity, into a miserly pride of exclusiveness, into a poverty of mind that dumbly revolves around itself in an unmeaning repetition of a past that has lost its light and has no message for the pilgrims of the future.'

One has not only to go back in time but to travel, in mind if not in body, to various countries of Asia, where India spread out in many ways, leaving immortal testimony of her spirit, her power, and her love of beauty. How few of us know of these great achievements of our past, how few realize that if India was great in thought and philosophy, she was equally great in action. The history that men and women from India made far from their homeland has still to be written.

Sir Charles Eliot has written that 'Scant justice is done to India's position in the world by those European histories which recount the exploits of her invaders and leave the impression that her own people were a feeble dreamy folk, sundered from the rest of mankind by their seas and mountain frontiers. Such a picture takes no account of the intellectual conquests of the Hindus'.[1]

Eliot was probably unaware, when he wrote, of many recent discoveries in South-East Asia, which have revolutionized the conception of India's and Asia's past. The knowledge of those discoveries would have strengthened his argument and shown that Indian activities abroad, even apart from the spread of her thought, were very far from being insignificant. Of Sailendra, the mighty man of war and conquest and other achievements, Dr H. G. Quaritch Wales has written:[2] 'This great conqueror, whose achievements can only be compared with those of the greatest soldiers known to western history, and whose fame in his time sounded from Persia to China, in a decade or two built up a vast maritime empire which endured for five centuries, and made possible the marvellous flowering of Indian art and culture

[1] *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. I, p. xii.
[2] In *Towards Angkor*.

in Java and Cambodia. Yet in our encyclopaedias and histories . . . one will search in vain for a reference to this far-flung empire or to its noble founder. . . . The very fact of such an empire ever having existed is scarcely known, except by a handful of Oriental scholars.' The military exploits of these early Indian colonists are important as throwing light on certain aspects of the Indian character and genius which have hitherto not been appreciated. But far more important is the rich civilization they built up in their colonies and settlements and which endured for over a thousand years.

During the past quarter of a century a great deal of light has been thrown on the history of this widespread area in South-East Asia, which is sometimes referred to as Greater India.[1] From the first century of the Christian era onwards wave after wave of Indian colonists spread east and south-east reaching Ceylon, Burma, Malaya, Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Siam, Cambodia, and Indo-China. Some of them managed to reach Formosa, the Philippine Islands and Celebes. Even as far as Madagascar the current language is Indonesian with a mixture of Sanskrit words. The names that were given to these settlements were old Indian names. Thus Cambodia, as it is known now, was called Kamboja, which was a well-known town in ancient India, in Gandhara. This itself indicates roughly the period of this colonization, for at that time Gandhara (Afghanistan) must have been an important part of Aryan India.

What led to these extraordinary expeditions across perilous seas and what was the tremendous urge behind them? They could not have been thought of or organized unless they had been preceded for many generations or centuries by individuals or small groups intent on trade. In the most ancient Sanskrit books there are vague references to these countries of the East. It is not always easy to identify the names given in them but sometimes there is no difficulty. Java is clearly from *Yava dvipa* or the Island of Millet. Even today *jawa*

[1] See R. C. Majumdar's *Ancient Indian Colonies in the Far East*, Vol. II, *Suvarnadvipa*.

means barley or millet in India. The other names given in the old books are also usually associated with minerals, metals or some industrial or agricultural product. This nomenclature itself makes one think of trade. Dr R. C. Majumdar has pointed out that 'if literature can be regarded as a fair reflex of the popular mind, trade and commerce must have been a supreme passion in India in the centuries immediately preceding and following the Christian era'. All this indicates an expanding economy and a constant search for distant markets.

This trade gradually increased in the third and second centuries B.C. and then these adventurous traders and merchants may have been followed by missionaries, for this was just the period after Ashoka. The old stories in Sanskrit contain many accounts of perilous sea voyages and of shipwrecks. Both Greek and Arab accounts show that there was regular maritime intercourse between India and the Far East at least as early as the first century A.C. It is clear that ship-building was a well-developed and flourishing industry in ancient India. We have some details and particulars of the ships built in those days. Many Indian ports are mentioned. South Indian (Andhra) coins of the second and third centuries A.C. bear the device of a two-masted ship. The Ajanta frescoes depict the conquest of Ceylon and ships carrying elephants are shown. The huge states and empires that developed from the original Indian settlements were essentially naval powers interested in trade and, therefore, in the control of the sea-routes.

This was the background of the early colonizing ventures of the Indian people. Trade and adventure and the urge for expansion drew them to these eastern lands which were comprehensively described in old Sanskrit books as *Suvarnadvīpa*, the Island of Gold. The very name had a lure about it. The early colonists settled down, more followed and thus a peaceful penetration went on. There was a fusion of the Indians with the races they found there, and also the evolution of a mixed culture. It was only then, probably, that the political element came from India, some Kshatriya princes, cadets of the noble families, in search of adventure and dominion. The early colonists are supposed to

have gone from Kalinga on the east coast (Orissa) but it was the Hindu Pallava kingdom of the South that made an organized effort at colonization. The Sailendra dynasty, which became so famous in South-East Asia, is believed to have come from Orissa.

All these Indian colonies were situated between two great countries and two great civilizations—India and China. Thus they were influenced by both these countries and a mixed Indo-Chinese civilization grew up, but such was the nature of these two cultures that there was no conflict between the two and mixed patterns of different shapes and varying contents emerged. As a rule the methods of government and the general philosophy of life came from China, religion and art from India. The mainland countries depended for their trade largely on China and there were frequent exchanges of ambassadors. But even in Cambodia and in the mighty remains of Angkor the only artistic influence that has been so far detected came from India.

Indian art derives its basic character from certain ideals associated with the religious and philosophic outlook of India. As religion went from India to all these eastern lands, so also went this basic conception of art. Probably the early colonies were definitely Brahminical and Buddhism spread later. The two existed side by side as friends, and mixed forms of popular worship grew up. This Buddhism was chiefly of the Mahayana type, easily adaptable, and both Brahminism and Buddhism, under the influence of local habits and traditions, had probably moved away from the purity of their original doctrines. In later years there were mighty conflicts between a Buddhist state and a Brahminical state, but these were essentially political and economic wars for control of trade and sea-routes.

The greatest of these states was the Sailendra Empire, or the empire of Sri Vijaya, which became the dominant power on both sea and land in the whole of Malaysia by the eighth century. A great ruler, Jayavarman, united the smaller states in the ninth century and built up the Cambodian Empire with its capital at Angkor. The capital became famous in Asia and was known as Angkor the Magnificent, a city of a million inhabitants,

larger and more splendid than the Rome of the Caesars.

Java also broke away from the Sailendra Empire in the ninth century and the Javan state which came to be known by the name of Majapahit now rose into prominence. It was a Brahminical state which had continued its attachment to the older faith in spite of the spread of Buddhism. It had resisted the political and economic sway of the Sailendra Empire of Sri Vijaya even when more than half of Java itself was occupied by the latter. The war between Majapahit and Sri Vijaya was a very cruel one and, though it ended in the complete victory of the former, it sowed the seeds of fresh conflict. From the ruins of the Sailendra power, allied to other elements, notably Arabs and Moslem converts, rose the Malay power in Sumatra and Malacca. The command of the eastern seas, which had so long been held by South India or the Indian colonies, now passed to the Arabs. Malacca rose into prominence as a great centre of trade and seat of political power, and Islam spread over the Malay peninsula and the islands. It was this new power that finally put an end to Majapahit towards the end of the fifteenth century. But within a few years, in 1511, the Portuguese, under Albuquerque, came and took possession of Malacca. Europe had reached the Far East, through her newly developing sea-power.

15 : The Influence of Indian Art abroad

These records of ancient empires and dynasties have an interest for the antiquarian, but they have a larger interest in the history of civilization and art. From the point of view of India they are particularly important, for it was India that functioned there and exhibited her vitality and genius in a variety of ways. We see her bubbling over with energy and spreading out far and wide, carrying not only her thought but her other ideals, her art, her trade, her language and literature, and her methods of government. She was not stagnant, or standing aloof, or isolated and cut off by mountain and sea. Her people crossed those high mountain barriers

and perilous seas and built up what M. René Grousset calls ‘a Greater India’.

Indian civilization took root especially in the countries of South-East Asia and the evidence for this can be found all over the place today. There were great centres of Sanskrit learning in Champa, Angkor, Sri Vijaya, Majapahit, and other places. The names of the rulers of the various states and empires that arose are Indian and Sanskrit. This does not mean that they were pure Indians but it does mean that they were Indianized. State ceremonies were Indian and conducted in Sanskrit. All the officers of the state bear old Sanskrit titles and some of these titles and designations have been continued up till now, not only in Thailand but in the Moslem states of Malaya. The old literatures of these places in Indonesia are full of Indian myth and legend. The famous dances of Java and Bali derive from India. The little island of Bali has indeed largely maintained its old Indian culture down to modern times and even Hinduism has persisted there. The art of writing went to the Philippines from India.

In Cambodia the alphabet is derived from South India and numerous Sanskrit words have been taken over with minor variations. The civil and criminal law is based on the Laws of Manu, the ancient law-giver of India, and this has been codified, with variations due to Buddhist influence, in modern Cambodian legislation.

But above all else it is in the magnificent art and architecture of these old Indian colonies that the Indian influence is most marked. At Borobudur in Java the whole life-story of Buddha is carved in stone. At other places bas-reliefs reproduce the legends of Vishnu and Rama and Krishna. Of Angkor, Mr Osbert Sitwell has written: ‘Let it be said immediately that Angkor, as it stands, ranks as chief wonder of the world today, one of the summits to which human genius has aspired in stone, infinitely more impressive, lovely and, as well, romantic, than anything that can be seen in China . . . the material remains of a civilization that flashed its wings, of the utmost brilliance, for six centuries, and

then perished so utterly that even its name had died from the lips of man.'[1]

The inspiration for Angkor came from India but it was the Khmer genius that developed it, or the two fused together and produced this wonder. The Cambodian king who is said to have built this great temple is named Jayavarman VII, a typical Indian name.

This leads one to think that in India itself that original inspiration gradually faded because the mind and the soil became overworked and undernourished for lack of fresh currents and ideas. So long as India kept her mind open and gave of her riches to others, and received from them what she lacked, she remained fresh and strong and vital. But the more she withdrew into her shell, intent on preserving herself, uncontaminated by external influences, the more she lost that inspiration and her life became increasingly a dull round of meaningless activities all centred in the dead past. Losing the art of creating beauty, her children lost even the capacity to recognize it.

Some years ago I had a letter from a Thai student who had come to Tagore's Santiniketan and was returning to Thailand. He wrote: 'I always consider myself exceptionally fortunate in being able to come to this great and ancient land of Aryavarta and to pay my humble homage at the feet of grandmother India in whose affectionate arms my mother country was so lovingly brought up and taught to appreciate and love what was sublime and beautiful in culture and religion.' This may not be typical, but it does convey some idea of the general feeling towards India.

'From Persia to the Chinese Sea,' writes Sylvain Lévi, 'from the icy regions of Siberia to the islands of Java and Borneo, from Oceania to Socotra, India has propagated her beliefs, her tales and her civilization. She has left indelible imprints on one-fourth of the human race in the course of a long succession of centuries. She has the right to reclaim in universal history the rank that ignorance has refused her for a long time and to

[1] Osbert Sitwell, *Escape With Me*, p. 90.

hold her place amongst the great nations summarizing and symbolizing the spirit of Humanity.'

16 : Old Indian Art

The amazing expansion of Indian culture and art to other countries has led to some of the finest expressions of this art being found outside India. 'In each of these countries, Indian art encounters a different racial genius, a different local environment, and under their modifying influence it takes on a different garb.'[1]

Indian art is so intimately associated with Indian religion and philosophy that it is difficult to appreciate it fully unless one has some knowledge of the ideals that governed the Indian mind. In art, as in music, there is a gulf which separates Eastern from Western conceptions. Probably the great artists and builders of the middle ages in Europe would have felt more in tune with Indian art and sculpture than modern European artists who derive part of their inspiration at least from the Renaissance period and after. For in Indian art there is always a religious urge, a looking beyond, such as probably inspired the builders of the great cathedrals of Europe. Beauty is conceived as subjective, not objective; it is a thing of the spirit, though it may also take lovely shape in form or matter. The Greeks loved beauty for its own sake and found not only joy but truth in it; the ancient Indians loved beauty also but always they sought to put some deeper significance in their work, some vision of the inner truth as they saw it.

An eminent and representative English author, Mr Osbert Sitwell, says in his book *Escape With Me* (1939) that 'the idea of India, despite its manifold and diverse marvels, continued to be repellent'. He refers also to 'that repulsive, greasy quality that so often mars Hindu works of art'.

Mr Sitwell is perfectly justified in holding those opinions about Indian art or India generally. I am sure

[1] Sir John Marshall, in Foreword to Reginald Le May's *Buddhist Art in Siam*, quoted by Ghosal in *Progress of Greater Indian Research*.

he feels that way. I am myself repelled by much in India but I do not feel that way about India as a whole. Naturally; for I am an Indian and I cannot easily hate myself, however unworthy I may be.

Among the Englishmen who have appreciated Indian art and applied new standards of judgement to it have been Laurence Binyon and E. B. Havell. Havell is particularly enthusiastic about the ideals of Indian art and the spirit underlying them. He emphasizes that a great national art affords an intimate revelation of national thought and character, but is only to be appreciated if the ideals behind it are understood. Indian art, he says, was not addressed to a narrow coterie of literati. Its intention was to make the central ideas of religion and philosophy intelligible to the masses. 'That Hindu art was successful in its educational purpose may be inferred from the fact, known to all who have intimate acquaintance with Indian life, that the Indian peasantry, though illiterate in the western sense, are among the most cultured of their class anywhere in the world.'[1]

In art, as in Sanskrit poetry and Indian music, the artist was supposed to identify himself with nature in all her moods, to express the essential harmony of man with nature and the universe. That has been the keynote of all Asiatic art and it is because of this that there is a certain unity about the art of Asia, in spite of its great variety and the national differences that are so evident. There is not much of old painting in India, except for the lovely frescoes of Ajanta. Perhaps much of it has perished. It was in her sculpture and architecture that India stood out, just as China and Japan excelled in painting.

Indian music, which is so different from European music, was highly developed in its own way and India stood out in this respect and influenced Asiatic music considerably, except for China and the Far East. Music thus became another link with Persia, Afghanistan, Arabia, Turkestan and, to some extent, in other areas where Arab civilization flourished, for instance North

[1] E. B. Havell, *The Ideals of Indian Art*, p. xix.

Africa. Indian classical music will probably be appreciated in all these countries.

An important influence in the development of art in India, as elsewhere in Asia, was the religious prejudice against graven images. The Vedas were against image-worship and it was only at a comparatively late period in Buddhism that Buddha's person was represented in sculpture and painting.

The early period of Indian art is full of a naturalism which may partly be due to Chinese influences. Chinese influence is visible at various stages of Indian art history, chiefly in the development of this naturalism, just as Indian idealism went to China and Japan and powerfully influenced them during some of their great periods.

Ajanta takes one back into some distant dreamlike and yet very real world. These frescoes were painted by the Buddhist monks. Keep away from women, do not even look at them, for they are dangerous, had said their Master long ago. And yet we have here women in plenty, beautiful women, princesses, singers, dancers, seated and standing, beautifying themselves, or in procession. The women of Ajanta have become famous How well those painter-monks must have known the world and the moving drama of life, how lovingly they have painted it, just as they have painted the Bodhisattva in his calm and other-worldly majesty.

In the seventh and eighth centuries the mighty caves of Ellora were carved out of solid rock with the stupendous Kailasa temple in the centre; it is difficult to imagine how human beings conceived this or, having conceived it, gave body and shape to their conception. The caves of Elephanta, with the powerful and subtle *Trimūrti*, date also from this period. Also the group of monuments at Mamallapuram in South India.

In the Elephanta caves there is a broken statue of *Shiva Natarāja*, Shiva dancing. Even in its mutilated condition, Havell says that it is a majestic conception and an embodiment of titanic power. 'Though the rock itself seems to vibrate with the rhythmic movement of the dance, the noble head bears the same look of serene calm and dispassion which illuminate the face of the Buddha!'

17 : *India's Foreign Trade*

Throughout the first millennium of the Christian era, India's trade was widespread and Indian merchants controlled many foreign markets. It was dominant in the eastern seas and it reached out also to the Mediterranean. Pepper and other spices went from India or via India to the West, often in Indian and Chinese bottoms. Roman writers bemoaned the fact that gold flowed from Rome to India and the East in exchange for various luxury articles.

This trade was largely, in India as elsewhere at the time, one of give-and-take of materials found and developed locally. India had been manufacturing cloth from the earliest ages, long before other countries did so, and a textile industry had developed. Indian textiles went to far countries. Silk was also made from very early times though probably it was not nearly as good as Chinese silk. An important advance was made in the dyeing of cloth, and special methods were discovered for the preparation of fast dyes. Among these was indigo, a word derived from India through Greek. It was probably this knowledge of dyeing that gave a great impetus to India's trade with foreign countries.

Chemistry in India in the early centuries A.C. was probably more advanced than in other countries. I do not know much about it but there is a *History of Hindu Chemistry* written by the doyen of Indian chemists and scientists, Sir P. C. Ray, who trained several generations of Indian scientists.

The tempering of steel was known early in India, and Indian steel and iron were valued abroad, especially for warlike purposes. It is difficult to say how far mechanical appliances had developed then, but ship-building was a flourishing industry and there is frequent reference to various kinds of 'machines', especially for purposes of war. This has led some enthusiastic and rather credulous Indians to imagine all kinds of complicated machines. It does seem, however, that India at that time was not behind any country in the making and use of tools and in the knowledge of chemistry and metal-

lurgy. It was this that gave her an advantage in trade and enabled her for several centuries to control a number of foreign markets.

Possibly she had one other advantage also—the absence of slave-labour, which handicapped Greek and other early civilizations and came in the way of their progress. The caste system, with all its evils, was infinitely better than slavery even for those lowest in the scale. Within each caste there was equality and a measure of freedom; each caste was occupational and applied itself to its own particular work. This led to a high degree of specialization and skill in handicrafts and craftsmanship.

18 : Mathematics in Ancient India

Highly intellectual and given to abstract thinking as they were, one would expect the ancient Indians to excel in mathematics. Europe got its early arithmetic and algebra from the Arabs—hence the 'Arabic numerals'—but the Arabs themselves had previously taken them from India. The astonishing progress that the Indians had made in mathematics is now well known and it is recognized that the foundations of modern arithmetic and algebra were laid long ago in India. The clumsy method of using a counting frame and the use of Roman and suchlike numerals had long retarded progress when the ten Indian numerals, including the zero sign, liberated the human mind from these restrictions and threw a flood of light on the behaviour of numbers. These number symbols were unique and entirely different from all other symbols that had been in use in other countries. They are common enough today and we take them for granted, yet they contained the germs of revolutionary progress in them. A hundred and fifty years ago, during Napoleon's time, La Place wrote: 'We shall appreciate the grandeur of this achievement when we remember that it escaped the genius of Archimedes and Apollonius, two of the greatest men produced by antiquity.'[1]

[1] Quoted in Hogben's *Mathematics for the Million*, p. 284.

The origins of geometry, arithmetic, and algebra in India go back to remote periods. Probably to begin with there was some kind of geometrical algebra used for making figures for Vedic altars. Geometrical figures are even now commonly used in Hindu ceremonies. Geometry made progress in India but in this respect Greece and Alexandria went ahead. It was in arithmetic and algebra that India kept the lead. The earliest use of the zero symbol, so far discovered, is in one of the scriptural books dated about 200 B.C. The zero, called *shunya* or nothing, was originally a dot and later it became a small circle. It was considered a number like any other. Professor Halsted thus emphasizes the vital significance of this invention : 'The importance of the creation of the zero mark can never be exaggerated. This giving to airy nothing, not merely a local habitation and a name, a picture, a symbol, but helpful power, is the characteristic of the Hindu race from whence it sprang. It is like coining the Nirvana into dynamos. No single mathematical creation has been more potent for the general on-go of intelligence and power.' [1]

We can assume that these momentous inventions were not just due to the momentary illumination of an erratic genius, much in advance of his time, but that they answered some insistent demand of the times. Genius of a high order was certainly necessary to find this out and fulfil the demand, but if the demand had not been there the urge to find some way out would have been absent, and even if the invention had been made it would have been forgotten or put aside till circumstances more propitious for its use arose. It seems clear from the early Sanskrit works on mathematics that the demand was there, for these books are full of problems of trade and social relationship involving complicated calculations. There are problems dealing with taxation, debt, and interest; problems of partnership, barter and exchange and the calculation of the fineness of gold. Society had grown complex and large numbers of people were engaged in governmental operations and in an ex-

[1] G. B. Halsted, *On the Foundation and Technique of Arithmetic*, p. 20 (Chicago, 1912), quoted in *History of Hindu Mathematics*, by B. Datta and A. N. Singh (1935).

tensive trade. It was impossible to carry on without simple methods of calculation.

These advances in mathematics are contained in books written by a succession of eminent mathematicians from the fifth to the twelfth century A.C. There are earlier books also (Baudhayana, *c.* eighth century B.C. ; Apastamba and Katyayana, both *c.* fifth century B.C.) which deal with geometrical problems, especially with triangles, rectangles, and squares. But the earliest extant book on algebra is by the famous astronomer, Aryabhata, who was born in A.C. 476. He wrote this book on astronomy and mathematics when he was only twenty-three years old. Aryabhata, who is sometimes called the inventor of algebra, must have relied, partly at least, on the work of his predecessors. The next great name in Indian mathematics is that of Bhaskara I (A.C. 522), and he was followed by Brahmagupta (628), who was also a famous astronomer, and who stated the laws applying to *shunya* and made other notable advances. There follow a succession of mathematicians who have written on arithmetic or algebra. The last great name is that of Bhaskara II, who was born in A.C. 1114. He wrote three books, on astronomy, algebra, and arithmetic. His book on arithmetic is known as *Lilavati*, which is an odd name for a treatise on mathematics, as it is the name of a woman. There are frequent references in the book to a young girl who is addressed as 'O Lilavati' and is then instructed on the problems stated. It is believed, without any definite proof, that Lilavati was Bhaskara's daughter. The style of the book is clear and simple and suitable for young persons to understand. The book is still used, partly for its style, in Sanskrit schools.

In the eighth century, during the region of the Khalif al-Mansur (753-74), a number of Indian scholars went to Baghdad, and among the books they took with them were works on mathematics and astronomy. Probably even earlier than this, Indian numerals had reached Baghdad, but this was the first systematic approach, and Aryabhata's and other books were translated into Arabic. They influenced the development of mathematics and astronomy in the Arab world, and Indian numerals were

introduced. Baghdad was then a great centre of learning, and Greek and Jewish scholars had gathered there bringing with them Greek philosophy, geometry, and science. The cultural influence of Baghdad was felt throughout the Moslem world from Central Asia to Spain, and a knowledge of Indian mathematics in their Arabic translations spread all over this vast area. The numerals were called by the Arabs 'figures of Hind' (or India), and the Arabic word for a number is *hindsah*, meaning 'from Hind'.

From this Arab world the new mathematics travelled to European countries, probably through the Moorish universities of Spain, and became the foundation for European mathematics. There was opposition in Europe to the use of the new numbers, as they were considered infidel symbols, and it took several hundred years before they were in common use. The earliest known use is in a Sicilian coin of 1134; in Britain the first use is in 1490.

Mathematics in India inevitably makes one think of one extraordinary figure of recent time. This was Srinivasa Ramanujam. Born in a poor Brahmin family in South India, having no opportunities for a proper education, he became a clerk in the Madras Port Trust. But he was bubbling over with some irrepressible quality of instinctive genius and played about with numbers and equations in his spare time. By a lucky chance he attracted the attention of a mathematician who sent some of his amateur work to Cambridge in England. People there were impressed and a scholarship was arranged for him. So he left his clerk's job and went to Cambridge and during a very brief period there did work of profound value and amazing originality. The Royal Society of England went rather out of their way and made him a Fellow, but he died two years later, probably of tuberculosis, at the age of thirty-three. Professor Julian Huxley has, I believe, referred to him somewhere as the greatest mathematician of the century.

Ramanujam's brief life and death are symbolic of conditions in India. Of our millions how few get any education at all, how many live on the verge of starvation; of even those who get some education how many

have nothing to look forward to but a clerkship in some office on a pay that is usually far less than the unemployment dole in England. If life opened its gates to them and offered them food and healthy conditions of living and education and opportunities of growth, how many among these millions would be eminent scientists, educationists, technicians, industrialists, writers, and artists, helping to build a new India and a new world ?

19 : *Growth and Decay*

During the first thousand years of the Christian era, there are many ups and downs in India, many conflicts with invading elements and internal troubles. Yet it is a period of a vigorous national life, bubbling over with energy and spreading out in all directions. Culture develops into a rich civilization flowering out in philosophy, literature, drama, art, science, and mathematics. India's economy expands, the Indian horizon widens and other countries come within its scope. Contacts grow with Iran, China, the Hellenic world, Central Asia, and above all, there is a powerful urge towards the eastern seas which leads to the establishment of Indian colonies and the spread of Indian culture far beyond India's boundaries. During the middle period of this millennium, from early in the fourth to the sixth century, the Gupta Empire flourishes and becomes the patron and symbol of this widespread intellectual and artistic activity. It is called the Golden or Classical Age of India, and the writings of that period, which are the classics of Sanskrit literature, reveal a quiet serenity, a confidence of the people in themselves, and a glow of pride at being privileged to be alive in that high noon of civilization, and with it the urge to use their great intellectual and artistic powers to the utmost.

Yet even before that Golden Age had come to a close, signs of weakness and decay become visible. The White Huns come from the North-West in successive hordes and are repeatedly pushed back. This long-drawn-out conflict weakened India politically and militarily, and probably the settlement of large numbers of these Huns

all over Northern India gradually produced an inner change in the people. They were absorbed as all foreign elements had so far been absorbed, but they left their impress and weakened the old ideals of the Indo-Aryan races. Old accounts of the Huns are full of their excessive cruelty and barbarous behaviour, which were so foreign to Indian standards of warfare and government.

In the seventh century there was a revival and renascence under Harsha, both political and cultural. Ujjayini (modern Ujjain), which had been the brilliant capital of the Guptas, again became a centre of art and culture and the seat of a powerful kingdom. In the ninth century Mihir Bhoja, of Gujrat, consolidates a unified state in North and Central India with his capital at Kanauj. There is another literary revival of which the central figure is Rajashekhara. Again, at the beginning of the eleventh century, another Bhoja stands out as a powerful and attractive figure, and Ujjayini again becomes a great capital.

And yet for all these bright patches, an inner weakness seems to seize India, which affects not only her political status but her creative activities. There is no date for this, for the process was a slow and creeping one, and it affected North India earlier than the South. The South indeed becomes more important both politically and culturally. Perhaps this was due to the South having escaped the continuous strain of fighting waves of invaders; perhaps many of the writers and artists and master-builders migrated to the South to escape from the unsettled conditions in the North. The powerful kingdoms of the South, with their brilliant courts, must have attracted these people and given them opportunities for creative work which they lacked elsewhere.

But though the North did not dominate India, as it had often done in the past, and was split up into small states, life was still rich there and there were many centres of cultural and philosophic activity. Benares, as ever, was the heart of religious and philosophical thought, and every person who advanced a new theory or a new interpretation of an old theory, had to come there to justify himself. Kashmir was for long a great Sanskrit centre of Buddhist and Brahminical learning.

The great universities flourished; of these, Nalanda, the most famous of all, was respected for its scholarship all over India. To have been to Nalanda was a hall-mark of culture. It was not easy to enter that university, for admission was restricted to those who had already attained a certain standard. It specialized in post-graduate study and attracted students from China, Japan, and Tibet, and even, it is said, from Korea and Mongolia and Bokhara. Apart from religious and philosophical subjects (both Buddhist and Brahminical), secular and practical subjects were also taught. There was a school of art and a department for architecture; a medical school; an agricultural department; dairy farms and cattle. The intellectual life of the university is said to have been one of animated debates and discussions. The spread of Indian culture abroad was largely the work of scholars from Nalanda.

Then there was the Vikramashila University, near modern Bhagalpur in Bihar, and Valabhi in Kathiawar. During the period of the Guptas, the Ujjayini University rose into prominence. In the South there was the Amaravati University.

Yet, as the millennium approached its end, all this appears to be the afternoon of a civilization; the glow of the morning had long faded away, high noon was past. In the South there was still vitality and vigour and this lasted for some centuries more; in the Indian colonies abroad there was aggressive and full-blooded life right up to the middle of the next millennium. But the heart seems to petrify, its beats are slower, and gradually this petrification and decay spread to the limbs. There is no great figure in philosophy after Shankara in the eighth century, though there is a long succession of commentators and dialecticians. Even Shankara came from the South. The sense of curiosity and the spirit of mental adventure give place to a hard and formal logic and a sterile dialectic. Both Brahminism and Buddhism deteriorate, and degraded forms of worship grow up, especially some varieties of Tantric worship and perversions of the Yoga system.

In literature, Bhavabhuti (eighth century) is the last great figure. Many books continued to be written, but

their style becomes more and more involved and intricate; there is neither freshness of thought nor of expression. In mathematics, Bhaskara II (twelfth century) is the last great name. In art it was in the seventh and eighth centuries that most of the great sculpture and painting in India was produced.

The last of the major emigrations for colonial settlement took place from South India in the ninth century, but the Cholas in the South continued to be a great sea power till the eleventh century, when they defeated and conquered Sri Vijaya.

We thus see that India was drying up and losing her creative genius and vitality. The process was a slow one and lasted several centuries, beginning in the North and finally reaching the South. What were the causes of this political decline and cultural stagnation? Was this due to age alone, that seems to attack civilizations as it does individuals, or to a kind of tidal wave with its forward and backward motion? Or were external causes and invasions responsible for it? Radhakrishnan says that Indian philosophy lost its vigour with the loss of political freedom.

It is true, for the loss of political freedom leads inevitably to cultural decay. But why should political freedom be lost unless some kind of decay has preceded it? That internal decay is clearly evident in India at the close of these thousand years. But India had survived decay and disruption before and rejuvenated herself afresh, sometimes retiring into her shell for a while and emerging again with fresh vigour. There always remained a dynamic core which could renew itself with fresh contacts and develop again, something different from the past and yet intimately connected with it. Had that capacity for adaptation, that flexibility of mind which had saved India so often in the past left her now? Had her fixed beliefs and the growing rigidity of her social structure made her mind also rigid? For if life ceases to grow and evolve, the evolution of thought also ceases. India had all along been a curious combination of conservatism in practice and explosive thought. Inevitably that thought affected the practice. But when thought lost its explosiveness and creative power and

become a tame attendant on an outworn and meaningless practice, mumbling old phrases and fearful of everything new, then life became stagnant and tied and constrained in a prison of its own making.

We have many examples of the collapse of a civilization, and perhaps the most notable of these is that of the European classical civilization which ended with the fall of Rome. Long before Rome fell to the invaders from the north, it had been on the verge of collapse from its own internal weaknesses. Its economy, once expanding, had shrunk and brought all manner of difficulties in its train. Urban industries decayed, flourishing cities grew progressively smaller and impoverished, and even fertility rapidly declined. The peasantry became serfs, and all superficial attempts to check the decline failed and even worsened conditions; and the Roman Empire collapsed.

There was and has been no such dramatic collapse of Indian civilization. Probably its progressive decline was the inevitable result of the growing rigidity and exclusiveness of the Indian social structure as represented chiefly by the caste system. Where Indians had gone abroad, as in South-East Asia, they were not so rigid in mind or customs or in their economy, and they had opportunities for growth and expansion. For another four or five hundred years they flourished in these colonies and displayed energy and creative vigour; but in India herself the spirit of exclusiveness sapped the creative faculty and developed a narrow, small-group, and parochial outlook. Life became cut up into set frames, where each man's job was fixed and permanent and he had little concern with others. It was the Kshatriya's business to fight in defence of the country, and others were not interested or were not even allowed to do so. The Brahmin and the Kshatriya looked down on trade and commerce. Education and opportunities of growth were withheld from the lower castes, who were taught to be submissive to those higher up in the scale.

For all its virtues and the stability it had given to Indian society, the caste system carried within it the seeds of destruction. It came in the way of expansion and a larger cohesion. It developed crafts and skill and

trade and commerce, but always within each group separately. Thus particular types of activity became hereditary and there was a tendency to avoid new types of work and activity and to confine oneself to the old groove, to restrict initiative and the spirit of innovation. It gave a measure of freedom within a certain limited sphere, but at the expense of the growth of a larger freedom and at the heavy price of keeping large numbers of people permanently at the bottom of the social ladder, deprived of the opportunities of growth. So long as that structure afforded avenues for growth and expansion, it was progressive; when it reached the limits of expansion open to it, it became stationary, unprogressive, and, later, inevitably regressive.

Because of this there was decline all along the line—intellectual, philosophical, political, in technique and methods of warfare, in knowledge of and contacts with the outside world, in shrinking economy, and there was a growth of local sentiments and feudal, small-group feeling at the expense of the larger conception of India as a whole. Yet, as later ages were to show, there was yet vitality in the old structure and an amazing tenacity, as well as some flexibility and capacity for adaptation. Because of this it managed to survive and to profit by new contacts and waves of thought, and even progress in some ways. But that progress was always tied down to and hampered by far too many relics of the past.

V : NEW PROBLEMS

1 : The Arabs and the Mongols

WHILE Harsha was reigning over a powerful kingdom in North India and Hsuan-tsang, the Chinese scholar-pilgrim, was studying at Nalanda University, Islam was taking shape in Arabia. Islam was to come to India both as a religious and a political force and create many new problems, but it is well to remember that it took a long time before it made much difference to the Indian scene. It was nearly six hundred years before it reached the heart of India and when it came, to the accompaniment of political conquest, it had already changed much and its standard-bearers were different. The Arabs who, in a fine frenzy of enthusiasm and with a dynamic energy, had spread out and conquered from Spain to the borders of Mongolia carrying with them a brilliant culture, did not come to India proper. They stopped at its north-western fringe and remained there. Arab civilization gradually decayed and various Turkish tribes came into prominence in Central and Western Asia. It was these Turkis and Afghans from the Indian borderland who brought Islam as a political force to India.

Widespread and apparently easy as the Arab conquests were, they did not go far beyond Sind in India, then or later. Was this due to the fact that India was still strong enough to resist effectively the invader? Probably so, for it is difficult to explain otherwise the lapse of several centuries before a real invasion took place. Partly it may have been due to the internal troubles of the Arabs. Sind fell away from the central authority at Baghdad and became a small independent Moslem state. But though there was no invasion, contacts between India and the Arab world grew, travellers came to and fro, embassies were exchanged, Indian books, especially on mathematics and astronomy, were taken to Baghdad and were translated into Arabic.

Many Indian physicians went to Baghdad. These trade and cultural relations were not confined to North India. The southern states of India also participated in them, especially the Rashtrakutas, on the west coast of India, for purposes of trade.

This frequent intercourse inevitably led to Indians getting to know the new religion, Islam. Missionaries also came to spread this new faith and they were welcomed. Mosques were built. There was no objection raised either by the State or the people, nor were there any religious conflicts. It was the old tradition of India to be tolerant to all faiths and forms of worship. Thus Islam came as a religion to India several centuries before it came as a political force.

Having rapidly conquered large parts of Asia, Africa, and a bit of Europe, the Arabs turned their minds to conquests in other fields. The empire was being consolidated, many new countries had come within their ken and they were eager to find out about this world and its ways. The intellectual curiosity, the adventures in rationalist speculation, the spirit of scientific inquiry among the Arabs of the eighth and ninth centuries are very striking. Arab travellers, among the greatest of their kind, go to far countries to find out what other peoples were doing and thinking, to study and understand their philosophies and sciences and ways of life, and then to develop their own thought.

There were many contacts with India during this period and the Arabs learnt much of Indian mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. And yet it would appear that the initiative for all these contacts came chiefly from the Arabs, and though the Arabs learned much from India, the Indians did not learn much from the Arabs. The Indians remained aloof, wrapped up in their own conceits, and keeping as far as possible within their own shells. This was unfortunate, for the intellectual ferment of Baghdad and the Arab renaissance movement would have shaken up the Indian mind just when it was losing much of its creative vigour. In that spirit of intellectual inquiry the Indians of an older day would have found kinship in thought.

The study of Indian learning and science in Baghdad was greatly encouraged by the powerful Barmak family (the Barmecides), which gave viziers to Harun al-Rashid. This family had probably been converted from Buddhism. During an illness of Harun al-Rashid, a physician named Manak was sent for from India. Manak settled down in Baghdad and was appointed the head of a large hospital there. Arab writers mention six other Indian physicians living in Baghdad at the time, besides Manak.

In philosophy the influence of India does not seem to have been marked. Both for philosophy and science the Arabs looked to Greece and the old Alexandrian schools. Plato and, more especially, Aristotle exercised a powerful influence on the Arab mind and since then, and up to the present day, they have become, more in Arabic commentaries than in the original versions, standard subjects for study in Islamic schools. Neo-Platonism from Alexandria also influenced the Arab mind. The materialist school of Greek philosophy reached the Arabs and led to the rise of rationalism and materialism.

The flowering of Arab culture and civilization in Western and Central Asia derived its inspiration from two main sources—Arab and Iranian. The two mixed inextricably, producing a vigour of thought as well as a high standard of living conditions for the upper classes. From the Arabs came the vigour and the spirit of inquiry; from the Iranians, the graces of life, art, and luxury. As Baghdad waned under Turkish domination, the spirit of rationalism and inquiry also declined. Chengiz Khan and the Mongols put an end to all this. A hundred years later Central Asia woke up again and Samarkhand and Herat became centres for painting and architecture, reviving somewhat the old traditions of Arab-Persian civilization. But there was no revival of Arab rationalism and interest in science. Islam had become a more rigid faith suited more to military conquests rather than the conquests of the mind. Its chief representatives in Asia were no longer the Arabs, but

the Turks[1] and the Mongols (later called Moghuls in India), and to some extent the Afghans.

2 : *Mahmud of Ghazni and the Afghans*

Early in the eighth century, in 712, the Arabs had reached Sind and occupied it. They stopped there. Even Sind fell away from the Arab Empire within half a century or so, though it continued as a small independent Moslem State. For nearly three hundred years there was no further invasion of or incursion into India. About A.C. 1000, Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni in Afghanistan, a Turk who had risen to power in Central Asia, began his raids into India. There were many such raids and they were bloody and ruthless, and on every occasion Mahmud carried away with him a vast quantity of treasure. A scholar-contemporary, Alberuni of Khiva, describes these raids: 'The Hindus became like the atoms of dust scattered in all directions and like a tale of old in the mouths of people. Their scattered remains cherish of course the most inveterate aversion towards all Moslems.' This poetic description gives us some idea of the devastation caused by Mahmud, and yet it is well to remember that Mahmud touched and despoiled only a part of North India, chiefly along the lines of his marches. The whole of Central, Eastern, and South India escaped from him completely.

Mahmud annexed the Punjab and Sind to his dominions and returned to Ghazni after each raid. He was unable to conquer Kashmir. This mountain country succeeded in checking and repulsing him. He met with a severe defeat also in the Rajputana desert regions on his way back from Somnath in Kathiawar. This was his last raid and he did not return.

India was to Mahmud just a place from which he

[1] I have often used the word 'Turk' or 'Turki'. This may confuse, as 'Turk' is associated now with the people of Turkey, who are descended from the Osmanli or Ottoman Turks. But there were other kinds of Turks also—Seljuks, etc. All the Turanian races of Central Asia, Chinese Turkestan, etc., may be called Turks or Turkis.

could carry off treasure and material to his homeland. He was anxious to make his own city of Ghazni rival the great cities of Central and Western Asia and he carried off from India large numbers of artisans and master-builders. Building interested him and he was much impressed by the city of Mathura (modern Muttra) near Delhi. About this he wrote : 'There are here a thousand edifices as firm as the faith of the faithful ; nor is it likely that this city has attained its present condition but at the expense of many millions of dinars, nor could such another be constructed under a period of two hundred years.'

Alberuni, a scholar and traveller, was a contemporary, and in his books he gives us a glimpse into other aspects of life in Central Asia then. Born near Khiva, but of Persian descent, he came to India and travelled a great deal. He tells us of the great irrigation works in the Chola kingdom in the South, though it is doubtful if he visited them himself or went to South India. He learnt Sanskrit in Kashmir and studied the religion, philosophy, science, and arts of India. He had previously learnt Greek in order to study Greek philosophy. His books are not only a storehouse of information, but tell us how, behind war and pillage and massacre, patient scholarship continued, and how the people of one country tried to understand those of another even when passion and anger had embittered their relations. That passion and anger no doubt clouded the judgements on either side, and each considered his own people superior to the other. Of the Indians, Alberuni says that they are 'haughty, foolishly vain, self-contained, and stolid,' and that they believe 'there is no country like theirs, no nation like theirs, no kings like theirs, no science like theirs'. Probably a correct enough description of the temper of the people.

Mahmud's raids demonstrated the weakness and decay of North India, and Alberuni's accounts throw further light on the political disintegration of the North and West. These repeated incursions from the north-west brought many new elements into India's closed thought and economy. Above all they brought Islam, for the first time, to the accompaniment of ruthless military con-

quest. So far, for over three hundred years, Islam had come peacefully as a religion and taken its place among the many religions of India without trouble or conflict. The new approach produced powerful psychological reactions among the people and filled them with bitterness. There was no objection to a new religion, for India was always a country of many religions, but there was strong objection to anything which forcibly interfered with and upset their way of life.

Mahmud died in 1030 and more than a hundred and sixty years after, in 1192, an Afghan named Shahab ud-Din Ghuri sat on the throne of Delhi, after taking it from Prithvi Raj.

This conquest of Delhi did not mean the subjugation of the rest of India. The Cholas were still powerful in the South, and there were other independent states. It took another century and a half for Afghan rule to spread over the greater part of the South. But Delhi was significant and symbolic of the new order.

3 : The Indo-Afghans : South India : Vijayanagar : Babar : Sea-power

Indian history has usually been divided by English as well as some Indian historians into three major periods : Ancient or Hindu, Moslem, and the British period. This division is neither intelligent nor correct; it is deceptive and gives a wrong perspective. It deals more with the superficial changes at the top than with the essential changes in the political, economic, and cultural development of the Indian people. The so-called ancient period is vast and full of change, of growth and decay, and then growth again. What is called the Moslem or medieval period brought another change, and an important one, and yet it was more or less confined to the top and did not vitally affect the essential continuity of Indian life. The invaders who came to India from the north-west, like so many of their predecessors in more ancient times, became absorbed into India and formed part of her life. Their dynasties became Indian dynasties and there was

a great deal of racial fusion by intermarriage. A deliberate effort was made, apart from a few exceptions, not to interfere with the ways and customs of the people. They looked to India as their home country and had no other affiliations. India continued to be an independent country.

The coming of the British made a vital difference and the old system was uprooted in many ways. They brought an entirely different impulse from the West, which had slowly developed in Europe from the times of the Renaissance, Reformation, and Political Revolution in England, and was taking shape in the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution. The American and French Revolutions were to carry this further. The British remained outsiders, aliens and misfits in India, and made no attempt to be otherwise. Above all, for the first time in India's history, her political control was exercised from outside and her economy was centred in a distant place. They made India a typical colony of the modern age, a subject country for the first time in her long history.

Mahmud of Ghazni's invasion of India was certainly a foreign Turkish invasion and resulted in the Punjab being separated from the rest of India for a while. The Afghans who came at the end of the twelfth century were different. They were an Indo-Aryan race closely allied to the people of India. Indeed, for long stretches of time Afghanistan had been, and was destined to be, a part of India. Their language, Pashto, was basically derived from Sanskrit. There are few places in India or outside which are so full of ancient monuments and remains of Indian culture, chiefly of the Buddhist period, as Afghanistan. More correctly, the Afghans should be called the Indo-Afghans. They differed in many ways from the people of the Indian plains, just as the people of the mountain valleys of Kashmir differed from the dwellers of the warmer and flatter regions below.

But soon the Afghan invaders toned down. India became their home and Delhi was their capital, not distant Ghazni as in Mahmud's time. Afghanistan, where they came from, was just an outlying part of their

kingdom. The process of Indianization was rapid, and many of them married women of the country. One of their great rulers, Allauddin Khilji, himself married a Hindu lady, and so did his son.

The Delhi Sultanate spread southwards. The Chola kingdom was declining, but in its place a new seafaring power had grown. This was the Pandya kingdom, with its capital at Madura and its port at Kayal on the east coast. It was a small kingdom but a great centre of trade. Marco Polo twice visited this port on his way from China, in 1288 and 1293, and described it as 'a great and noble city', full of ships from Arabia and China. He also mentions the very fine muslins, which 'look like tissues of a spider's web', and which were made on the east coast of India.

Early in the fourteenth century, two great states had risen in the South—Gulbarga, called the Bahmani kingdom, and the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar. Gulbarga now split up into five states, one of these being Ahmadnagar. Ahmad Nizam Shah, the founder of Ahmadnagar in 1490, was the son of Nizam ul-Mulk Bhairi, a minister of the Bahmani kings. This Nizam Mulk was the son of a Brahmin accountant named Bhairu (from which his name Bhairi). Thus the Ahmadnagar dynasty was of indigenous origin, and Chand Bibi, the heroine of Ahmadnagar, had mixed blood. All the Moslem states in the South were indigenous and Indianized.

After Timur's sack of Delhi, North India remained weak and divided up. South India was better off and the largest and most powerful of the southern kingdoms was Vijayanagar. This state and city attracted many of the Hindu refugees from the North. From contemporary accounts it appears that the city was rich and very beautiful. 'The city is such that eye has not seen nor ear heard of any place resembling it upon the whole earth,' says Abdur Razzak, from Central Asia. There were arcades and magnificent galleries for the bazaars, and rising above them all was the palace of the king, surrounded by 'many rivulets and streams flowing through channels of cut stone, polished and even'. The whole city was full of gardens and because of them the

circumference of the city was sixty miles. A later visitor was Paes, a Portuguese who came in 1522 after having visited the Italian cities of the Renaissance. The city of Vijayanagar, he says, is as 'large as Rome and very beautiful to the sight', it is full of charm and wonder with its innumerable lakes and waterways and fruit gardens. It is 'the best-provided city in the world' and 'everything abounds'. The chambers of the palace were a mass of ivory, with roses and lotuses carved in ivory at the top, 'it is so rich and beautiful that you would hardly find anywhere another such'. Of the ruler, Krishna Deva Raya, Paes writes: 'He is the most feared and perfect king that could possibly be, cheerful of disposition and very merry; he is one that seeks to honour foreigners, and receives them kindly, asking about all their affairs whatever their condition may be.'

While Vijayanagar was flourishing in the South, the petty Sultanate of Delhi had to meet a new foe. Yet another invader came down from the northern mountains, and on the famous battlefield of Panipat, near Delhi, where so often India's fate has been decided, he won the throne of Delhi in 1526. This was Babar, a Turko-Mongol and a prince of the Timurid line in Central Asia. With him begins the Moghul Empire of India.

Babar's success was probably due not only to the weakness of the Delhi Sultanate but to his possessing a new and improved type of artillery which was not in use in India then. From this period onwards India seems to lag behind in the developing science of warfare. It would be more correct to say that the whole of Asia remained where it was while Europe was advancing in this science. The great Moghul Empire, powerful as it was in India for 200 years, probably could not compete on equal terms with European armies from the seventeenth century onwards. But no European army could come to India unless it had control over the sea routes. The major change that was taking place during these centuries was the development of European sea-power. With the fall of the Chola kingdom in the South in the thirteenth century, Indian sea-power declined rapidly.

The small Pandya state, though intimately connected with the sea, was not strong enough. The Indian colonies, however, still continued to hold command over the Indian Ocean till the fifteenth century, when they were ousted by the Arabs, who were soon to be followed by the Portuguese.

4 : *Synthesis and Growth of Mixed Culture*

It is thus wrong and misleading to talk of a Moslem invasion of India or of the Moslem period in India, just as it would be wrong to refer to the coming of the British to India as a Christian invasion, or to call the British period in India a Christian period. Islam did not invade India ; it had come to India some centuries earlier. There was a Turkish invasion (Mahmud's), and an Afghan invasion, and then a Turko-Mongol or Moghul invasion ; and of these the two latter were important. The Afghans might well be considered a border Indian group, hardly strangers to India, and the period of their political dominance should be called the Indo-Afghan period. The Moghuls were outsiders and strangers to India and yet they fitted into the Indian structure with remarkable speed and began the Indo-Moghul period.

Through choice or circumstances or both, the Afghan rulers and those who had come with them merged into India. Their dynasties became completely Indianized with their roots in India, looking upon India as their homeland, and the rest of the world as foreign.

The effect of the Afghan conquest on India and Hinduism was twofold, each development contradicting the other. The immediate reaction was an exodus of people to the South, away from the areas under Afghan rule. Those who remained became more rigid and exclusive, retired into their shells, and tried to protect themselves from foreign ways and influences by hardening the caste system. On the other hand, there was a gradual and hardly conscious approach towards these foreign ways both in thought and life. A synthesis worked itself out : new styles of architecture arose : food and clothing

changed, and life was affected and varied in many other ways. This synthesis was especially marked in music, which, following its old Indian classical pattern, developed in many directions. The Persian language became the official court language and many Persian words crept into popular use. At the same time the popular languages were developed.

Among the unfortunate developments that took place in India was the growth of purdah, or the seclusion of women. Why this should have been so is not clear, but somehow it did result from the interaction of the new elements on the old. In India there had been previously some segregation of the sexes among the aristocracy, as in many other countries and notably in ancient Greece. Some such segregation existed in ancient Iran also and to some extent all over western Asia. But nowhere was there any strict seclusion of women. The Afghans, who crowded into northern India after the capture of Delhi, had no strict purdah. Turkish and Afghan princesses and ladies of the court often went riding, hunting, and paying visits. It is an old Islamic custom, still to be observed, that women must keep their faces unveiled during the Haj pilgrimage to Mecca. Purdah seems to have grown in India during Moghul times, when it became a mark of status and prestige among both Hindus and Moslems. This custom of seclusion of women spread especially among the upper classes of those areas where Moslem influence had been most marked, in the great central and eastern block comprising Delhi, the United Provinces, Rajputana, Bihar, and Bengal. And yet it is odd that purdah has not been very strict in the Punjab and in the Frontier Province, which are predominantly Moslem. In the South and West of India there has been no such seclusion of women, except to some extent among the Moslems.

Slowly a synthesis was working itself out between old ways and new. Most of the changes took place at the top, among the nobility and upper classes, and did not affect the mass of the population, especially the rural masses. They originated in court circles and spread in the cities and urban areas. Thus began a process which was to continue for several centuries, of developing a

mixed culture in North India. Delhi, and what are known now as the United Provinces, became the centre of the old Aryan culture. But much of this Aryan culture drifted to the South, which became a stronghold of Hindu orthodoxy.

All over India this new ferment was working and new ideas were troubling people's minds. Out of this ferment arose new types of reformers who deliberately preached this synthesis and often condemned or ignored the caste system. There was the Hindu Ramanand in the South, in the fifteenth century, and his still more famous disciple Kabir, a Moslem weaver of Benares. Kabir's poems and songs became, and still are, very popular. In the North there was Guru Nanak, who is considered the founder of Sikhism. The influence of these reformers went far beyond the limits of the particular sects that grew up after them. Hinduism as a whole felt the impact of the new ideas, and Islam in India also became somewhat different from what it was elsewhere. The fierce monotheism of Islam influenced Hinduism, and the vague pantheistic attitude of the Hindu had its effect on the Indian Moslem.

Perhaps the most significant indication of the growing absorption of the foreign element in India was its use of the popular language of the country, even though Persian continued to be the court language. There are many notable books written by the early Moslems in Hindi. The most famous of these writers was Amir Khusrau, a Turk whose family had settled in the United Provinces for two or three generations and who lived in the fourteenth century during the reigns of several Afghan sultans. He was a poet of the first rank in Persian, and he knew Sanskrit also. He was a great musician and introduced many innovations into Indian music. He is also said to have invented the *sitar*.

But his fame in India rests, above all, on his popular songs, written in the ordinary spoken dialect of Hindi. He sang of the different seasons, and each season, according to the old classical style of India, had its own appropriate tune and words; he sang of life in its various phases, of the coming of the bride, of separation from the beloved, of the rains when life springs anew from

the parched earth. Those songs are still widely sung and may be heard in any village or town in Northern or Central India.

5 : *The Indian Social Structure : Importance of the Group*

Almost everyone who knows anything at all about India has heard of the caste system; almost every outsider and many people in India condemn it or criticize it as a whole. Probably there is hardly anyone left even in India who approves of it in all its present ramifications and developments, though there are undoubtedly many still who accept its basic theory and large numbers of Hindus adhere to it in their lives. Some confusion arises in the use of the word 'caste', for different people attach a different meaning to it. The average European, or an Indian who is allied to him in thought and approach, thinks of it as just a petrification of classes, an ingenious method to preserve a certain hierarchy of classes, to keep the upper classes permanently at the top and the lower ones permanently at the bottom of the scale. There is truth in that, and in its origin it was probably a device to keep the Aryan conquerors apart from and above the conquered peoples. Undoubtedly in its growth it has acted in that way, though originally there may have been a good deal of flexibility about it. Yet that is only a part of the truth and it does not explain its power and cohesiveness and the way it has lasted down to our present day. It survived not only the powerful impact of Buddhism and many centuries of Afghan and Moghul rule and the spread of Islam, but also the strenuous efforts of innumerable Hindu reformers who raised their voices against it. It is only today that it is seriously threatened and its very basis has been attacked.

The caste system does not stand by itself; it is a part, and an integral part, of a much larger scheme of social organization. It may be possible to remove some of its obvious abuses and to lessen its rigidity, and yet to leave the system intact. But that is highly unlikely, as the social and economic forces at play are not much con-

cerned with this superstructure; they are attacking it at the base and undermining the other supports which held it up. Indeed, much of that support is already gone or is rapidly going, and more and more the caste system is left stranded by itself. It has ceased to be a question of whether we like caste or dislike it. Changes are taking place in spite of our likes and dislikes. But it is certainly in our power to mould those changes and direct them, so that we can take full advantage of the character and genius of the Indian people as a whole, which have been so evident in the cohesiveness and stability of the social organization they have built up.

Sir George Birdwood has said somewhere: 'So long as the Hindus hold to the caste system, India will be India; but from the day they break from it, there will be no more India.' The break-up of a huge and long-standing social organization may well lead to a complete disruption of social life, resulting in absence of cohesion, mass suffering and the development on a vast scale of abnormalities in individual behaviour, unless some other social structure, more suited to the times and to the genius of the people, takes its place. Perhaps disruption is inevitable during the transition period; there is enough of this disruption all over the world today. Perhaps it is only through the pain and suffering that accompany such disruption that a people grow and learn the lessons of life and adapt themselves anew to changing conditions.

Nevertheless, we cannot just disrupt and hope for something better without having some vision of the future we are working for, however vague that vision may be. We cannot just create a vacuum, or else that vacuum will fill itself up in a way that we may have to deplore. In the constructive schemes that we may make, we have to pay attention to the human material we have to deal with, to the background of its thought and urges, and to the environment in which we have to function. To ignore all this and to fashion some idealistic scheme in the air, or merely to think in terms of imitating what others have done elsewhere, would be folly. It becomes desirable therefore to examine and understand the old Indian social structure which has so powerfully influ-

enced our people. This structure was based on three concepts: the autonomous village community, caste, and the joint-family system. In all these three it is the group that counts; the individual has a secondary place. There is nothing very unique about all this separately and it is easy to find something equivalent to any of these three in other countries, especially in medieval times. Like the old Indian republics, there were primitive republics elsewhere. There was also a kind of primitive communism. The old Russian *mir* might be comparable in some ways to the Indian village community. Caste has been essentially functional and similar to the medieval trade guilds of Europe. The Chinese family system bears a strong resemblance to the Hindu joint family. I do not know enough of all these to carry the comparison far, and, in any case, it is not important for my purpose. Taken as a whole the entire Indian structure was certainly unique and, as it developed, it became more so.

6 : Village Self-Government

There is an old book, of the tenth century, which gives us some idea of Indian polity as it was conceived prior to the Turkish and Afghan invasions. This is the *Nītisāra,* the Science of Polity, by Shukracharya. It deals with the organization of the central government as well as of town and village life; of the king's Council of State and various departments of government.

Some old inscriptions further tell us how the members of the village councils were elected and what their qualifications and disqualifications were. Various committees were formed, elected annually, and women could serve on them. In case of misbehaviour, a member could be removed. A member could be disqualified if he failed to render accounts of public funds. An interesting rule to prevent nepotism is mentioned: near relatives of members were not to be appointed to public office.

These village councils were very jealous of their liberties and it was laid down that no soldier could enter

the village unless he had a royal permit. If the people complained of an official, the *Nītisāra* says that the king 'should take the side, not of his officers, but of his subjects'. If many complained then the official was to be dismissed, 'for who does not get intoxicated by drinking of the vanity of office?' The king was to act in accordance with the opinion of the majority of the people. 'Public opinion is more powerful than the king as the rope made of many fibres is strong enough to drag a lion.' 'In making official appointments work, character and merit are to be regarded—neither caste nor family,' and 'neither through colour nor through ancestors can the spirit worthy of a Brahmin be generated'.

In the larger towns there were many artisans and merchants, and craft-guilds, mercantile associations, and banking corporations were formed. Each of these controlled its own domestic affairs.

Foreign conquests brought war and destruction, revolts and their ruthless suppression, and new ruling classes relying chiefly on armed force. This ruling class could often ignore the numerous constitutional restraints which had always been part of the customary law of the country. Important consequences followed and the power of the self-governing village communities decreased and, later, various changes were introduced in the land-revenue system. Nevertheless the Afghan and Moghul rulers took special care not to interfere with old customs and conventions and no fundamental changes were introduced, and the economic and social structure of Indian life continued as before. Ghyas ud-Din Tughlak issued definite instructions to his officials to preserve customary law and to keep the affairs of the State apart from religion, which was a personal matter of individual preference. But changing times and conflicts, as well as the increasing centralization of government, slowly but progressively lessened the respect given to customary law. The village self-governing community, however, continued. Its break-up began only under British rule.

7 : *The Theory and Practice of Caste : The Joint Family*

'In India,' says Havell, 'religion is hardly a dogma, but a working hypothesis of human conduct, adapted to different stages of spiritual development and different conditions of life.' In the ancient days when Indo-Aryan culture first took shape, religion had to provide for the needs of men who were as far removed from each other in civilization and intellectual and spiritual development as it is possible to conceive. There were primitive forest-dwellers, fetishists, totem-worshippers and believers in every kind of superstition, and there were those who had attained the highest flights of spiritual thought. In between, there was every shade and gradation of belief and practice. While the highest forms of thought were pursued by some, these were wholly beyond the reach of many. As social life grew, certain uniformities of belief spread, but, even so, many differences, cultural and temperamental, remained. The Indo-Aryan approach was to avoid the forcible suppression of any belief or the destruction of any claim. Each group was left free to work out its ideals along the plane of its mental development and understanding. Assimilation was attempted but there was no denial or suppression.

A similar and even more difficult problem had to be faced in social organization. How to combine these utterly different groups in one social system, each group co-operating with the whole and yet retaining its own freedom to live its own life and develop itself ? In a sense—though the comparison is far-fetched—this may be compared to the numerous minority problems of today which afflict so many countries and are still far from solution.

If these difficulties and problems pursue us even today with all our knowledge and progress, how much harder they must have been in the ancient days when the Indo-Aryans were evolving their civilization and social structure in a land full of variety and different types of human beings. The normal way to deal with these problems then and later was to exterminate or enslave the

conquered populations. This way was not followed in India, but it is clear that every precaution was taken to perpetuate the superior position of the upper groups. Having ensured that superiority, a kind of multiple-community state was built up, in which, within certain limits and subject to some general rules, freedom was given to each group to follow its avocation and live its own life in accordance with its own customs or desires.

These groups were almost always functional, each specializing in a particular trade or craft. They became thus kinds of trade unions or craft-guilds. There was a strong sense of solidarity within each, which not only protected the group but sheltered and helped an individual member who got into trouble or was in economic distress. The functions of each group or caste were related to the functions of other castes, and the idea was that if each group functioned successfully within its own framework, then society as a whole worked harmoniously. Over and above this, a strong and fairly successful attempt was made to create a common national bond which would hold all these groups together—the sense of a common culture, common traditions, common heroes and saints, and a common land to the four corners of which people went on pilgrimage. This national bond was of course very different from the present-day nationalism; it was weak politically but, socially and culturally, it was strong. Because of its political lack of cohesiveness it facilitated foreign conquest; because of its social strength it made recovery easy, as well as assimilation of new elements. It had so many heads that they could not be cut off and they survived conquest and disaster.

Thus caste was a group system based on services and functions. It was meant to be an all-inclusive order without any common dogma and allowing the fullest latitude to each group. Within its wide fold there was monogamy, polygamy, and celibacy; they were all tolerated, just as other customs, beliefs, and practices were tolerated.

An individual was only considered as a member of a group; he could do anything he liked so long as he did not interfere with the functioning of the group. He had

no right to upset that functioning, but if he was strong enough and could gather enough supporters, it was open to him to form another group. If he could not fit in with any group, that meant that he was out of joint so far as the social activities of the world were concerned. He could then become a *sanyāsi* who had renounced caste, every group and the world of activity, and could wander about and do what he liked.

It must be remembered that while the Indian social tendency was to subordinate the individual to the claims of the group and society, religious thought and spiritual seeking have always emphasized the individual. Salvation and knowledge of the ultimate truth were open to all, to the member of every caste, high or low. This salvation or enlightenment could not be a group affair; it was highly individualistic. In the search for this salvation also there were no inflexible dogmas and all doors were supposed to lead to it.

Though the group system was dominant in the organization of society, leading to caste, there has always been an individualistic tendency in India. Buddhism was a breakaway from the group-caste ideal towards some kind of individualism as well as universalism. But this individualism became associated with a withdrawal from normal social activities. It offered no effective alternative social structure to caste, and so caste continued then and later.

What were the main castes? If we leave out for a moment those who were considered outside the pale of caste, the untouchables, there were the Brahmins, the priests, teachers, intellectuals; the Kshatriyas or the rulers and warriors; the Vaishyas or merchants, traders, bankers, etc.; and the Shudras, who were the agricultural and other workers. Probably the only closely knit and exclusive caste was that of the Brahmins. The Kshatriyas were frequently adding to their numbers both from foreign incoming elements and others in the country who rose to power and authority. The Vaishyas were chiefly traders and bankers and also engaged in a number of other professions. The main occupations of the Shudras were cultivation and domestic services. There was always a continuous process of new castes being

formed as new occupations developed, and for other reasons the older castes were always trying to go up in the social scale. These processes have continued to our day. Some of the lower castes suddenly take to wearing the sacred thread which is supposed to be reserved for the upper castes. All this really made little difference, as each caste continued to function in its own ambit and pursued its own trade or occupation. It was merely a question of prestige. Occasionally men of the lower classes, by sheer ability, attained to positions of power and authority in the state, but this was very exceptional.

The organization of society being, generally speaking, non-competitive and non-acquisitive, these divisions into castes did not make as much difference as they might otherwise have done. The Brahmin at the top, proud of his intellect and learning and respected by others, seldom had much in the way of worldly possessions. The merchant, prosperous and rich, had no very high standing in society as a whole.

The vast majority of the population consisted of the agriculturists. There was no landlord system, nor was there any peasant proprietorship. It is difficult to say who owned the land in law; there was nothing like the present doctrine of ownership. The major share of the produce went to the cultivator, the king or the State took a share (usually one-sixth), and every functional group in the village, which served the people in any way, had its share—the Brahmin priest and teacher, the merchant, the blacksmith, the carpenter, the cobbler, the potter, the builder, the barber, the scavenger, etc. Thus, in a sense, every group from the State to the scavenger was a shareholder in the produce.

Who were the depressed classes and the untouchables? The 'depressed classes' is a new designation applying rather vaguely to a number of castes near the bottom of the scale. The untouchables are more definite. Probably those who were engaged in occupations considered unclean were so treated; later, landless agricultural labour may have been added.

The idea of ceremonial purity has been extraordinarily strong among the Hindus. This has led to one good consequence and many bad ones. The good one is bodily

cleanliness. A daily bath has always been an essential feature of a Hindu's life, including most of the depressed classes. It was from India that this habit spread to England and elsewhere. The average Hindu, and even the poorest peasant, takes some pride in his shining pots and pans. This sense of cleanliness is not scientific and the man who bathes twice a day will unhesitatingly drink water that is unclean and full of germs. Nor is it corporate, at any rate now. The individual will keep his own hut fairly clean but throw all the rubbish into the village street in front of his neighbour's house. The village is usually very dirty and full of garbage heaps. It is also noticeable that cleanliness is not thought of as such but as a consequence of some religious sanction. When that religious sanction goes, there is marked deterioration in the standards of cleanliness.

The evil consequence of ceremonial purity was a growth of exclusiveness, touch-me-notism, and of not eating and drinking with people of other castes. This grew to fantastic lengths unknown in any other part of the world. This practice is breaking up now among the higher castes but it still continues among the lower castes, including the depressed classes.

If interdining was taboo, much more so was intermarriage between castes. Some mixed marriages inevitably took place but on the whole it is extraordinary how much each caste kept to itself and propagated its own kind.

The autonomous village community and the caste system were thus two of the special features of the old Indian social structure. The third was the joint family, where all the members were joint sharers in the common property and inheritance went by survivorship. The father or some other elder was the head but he functioned as a manager, and not as the old Roman paterfamilias. A division of property was permitted under certain circumstances and if the parties concerned so desired. It was a kind of insurance for all including even the subnormal and the physically or mentally deficient. Thus while there was security for all, there was a certain levelling down of the standard of service demanded as well as of the recompense given. Emphasis

was not laid on personal advantage or ambition but on that of the group, that is the family. The fact of growing up and living in a large family minimized the egocentric attitude of the child and tended to develop an aptitude for socialization.

All this is the very opposite of what happens in the highly individualistic civilization of the West and more especially of America, where personal ambition is encouraged and personal advantage is the almost universal aim, where all the plums go to the bright and pushing, and the weak, timid or second-rate go to the wall. The joint-family system is rapidly breaking up in India and individualistic attitudes are developing, leading not only to far-reaching changes in the economic background of life but also to new problems of behaviour.

All the three pillars of the Indian social structure were thus based on the group and not on the individual. The aim was social security, stability and continuance of the group, that is of society. Progress was not the aim and progress therefore had to suffer.

The democratic way was not only well known but was a common method of functioning in social life, in local government, trade-guilds, religious assemblies, etc. Caste, with all its evils, kept up the democratic habit in each group. There used to be elaborate rules of procedure, election and debate. The Marquess of Zetland has referred to some of these in writing about the early Buddhist assemblies : 'And it may come as a surprise to many to learn that in the Assemblies of the Buddhists in India two thousand or more years ago are to be found the rudiments of our own parliamentary practice of the present day. The dignity of the Assembly was preserved by the appointment of a special officer—the embryo of "Mr Speaker" in the House of Commons. A second officer was appointed whose duty it was to see that when necessary a quorum was secured—the prototype of the Parliamentary Chief Whip in our own system. A member initiating business did so in the form of a motion which was then open to discussion. In some cases this was done once only, in others three times, thus anticipating the practice of Parliament in requiring that a Bill be read a third time before it becomes law. If discussion

disclosed a difference of opinion the matter was decided by the vote of the majority, the voting being by ballot.'[1]

The old Indian social structure had thus some virtues, and indeed it could not have lasted so long without them. Behind it lay the philosophical ideal of Indian culture—the integration of man and the stress on goodness, beauty and truth rather than acquisitiveness. But the ultimate weakness and failing of the caste system and the Indian social structure were that they degraded a mass of human beings and gave them no opportunities to get out of that condition—educationally, culturally, or economically. In the context of society today, the caste system and much that goes with it are wholly incompatible, reactionary, restrictive, and barriers to progress. There can be no equality in status and opportunity within its framework, nor can there be political democracy and much less economic democracy. Between these two conceptions conflict is inherent and only one of them can survive.

8 : Akbar : The Process of Indianization

To go back. The Afghans had settled down in India and had become Indianized. Their rulers had to face first the problem of lessening the hostility of the people and then of winning them over. So, as a deliberate policy, they toned down their early ruthless methods, became more tolerant, invited co-operation, and tried to function not as conquerors from outside but as Indians born and bred in the land. What was at first a policy gradually became an inevitable trend as the Indian environment influenced these people from the north-west and absorbed them. The beginnings of a mixed culture began to appear and foundations were laid on which Akbar was to build.

The coming of Islam and of a considerable number of people from outside, with different ways of living and thought, affected existing beliefs and structure. A foreign conquest, with all its evils, has one advantage:

[1] Quoted by G. T. Garratt in *The Legacy of India*, p. xi.

it widens the mental horizon of the people and compels them to look out of their shells. They realize that the world is a much bigger and more variegated place than they had imagined.

There were many changes in India and new impulses brought freshness and life to art and architecture and other cultural patterns. And yet all this was the result of two old-world patterns coming into contact, both of which had lost their initial vitality and creative vigour and were set in rigid frames. Indian culture was very old and tired, the Arab-Persian culture had long passed its zenith, and the old curiosity and sense of mental adventure which distinguished the Arabs were no more in evidence.

Akbar the grandson of Babar is one of the most remarkable men in history. Daring and reckless, an able general, and yet gentle and full of compassion, an idealist and a dreamer, but also a man of action and a leader of men who roused the passionate loyalty of his followers. As a warrior he conquered large parts of India, but his eyes were set on another and more enduring conquest, the conquest of the minds and hearts of the people. Those compelling eyes of his were 'vibrant like the sea in sunshine', as Portuguese Jesuits of his court have told us. In him the old dream of a united India again took shape, united not only politically in one State but organically fused into one people. Throughout his long reign of nearly fifty years from 1556 onwards he laboured to this end. Many a proud Rajput chief, who would not have submitted to any other person, he won over to his side. He married a Rajput princess, and his son and successor, Jehangir, was thus half Moghul and half Hindu. Jehangir's son, Shah Jehan, was also the son of a Rajput mother.

Akbar's court became a meeting place for men of all faiths and for all who had some new idea or new invention. His toleration of views and his encouragement of all kinds of beliefs and opinions went so far as to anger some of the more orthodox Moslems. He even tried to start a new synthetic faith to suit everybody. It was in his reign that the cultural amalgamation of Hindu and Moslem in North India took a long step forward.

Akbar himself was certainly as popular with the Hindus as with the Moslems. The Moghul dynasty became firmly established as India's own.

9 : *The Contrast between Asia and Europe in Mechanical Advance and Creative Energy*

Akbar was full of curiosity, ever seeking to find out about things, both spiritual and temporal. He was interested in mechanical contrivances and in the science of war. He prized war-elephants especially, and they formed an important part of his army. The Portuguese Jesuits of his court tell us that 'he was interested in and curious to learn about many things, and possessed an intimate knowledge not only of military and political matters, but many of the mechanical arts'.

And yet it is very odd how his curiosity stopped at a point and did not lead him to explore certain obvious avenues which lay open before him. With all his great prestige as the Grand Moghul and the strength of his empire as a land power, he was powerless at sea. Vasco da Gama had reached Calicut, via the Cape, in 1498; Albuquerque had seized Malacca in 1511 and established Portuguese sea-power in the Indian Ocean. Goa on the western coast of India had become a Portuguese possession. All this did not bring the Portuguese into direct conflict with Akbar. Akbar had a vast continent to conquer and had little time to spare for the Portuguese, to whom he attached no importance even though they stung him occasionally. He did think of building ships once, but this was looked upon more as a pastime than a serious naval development.

Again in the matter of artillery the Moghul armies, as well as those of other states in India at the time, chiefly relied on foreign experts, who were usually Turks from the Ottoman dominions. These foreign experts trained local men, but why did not Akbar or anyone else send his own men abroad for training or

interest himself in improvement by encouraging research work ?

Yet another very significant thing. The Jesuits presented Akbar with a printed Bible and perhaps one or two other printed books. Why did he not get curious about printing, which would have been of tremendous advantage to him in his governmental activities as well as in his vast enterprises ?

It is not in India alone that this paralysis of creative energy and inventive faculty is visible during this period. The whole of Western and Central Asia suffered from it even more. I do not know about China but I imagine that some such stagnation affected her also. The world of the fifteenth century was, from this point of view, not very different from what it had been a thousand or two thousand years earlier.

While Asia had become dormant, exhausted, as it were, by its past efforts, Europe, backward in many ways, was on the threshold of vast changes. A new spirit, a new ferment, was at work sending her adventurers across the oceans and turning the minds of her thinkers in novel directions. The Renaissance had done little for the advancement of science; to some extent it turned people away from science, and the humanistic conservative education which it introduced in the universities prevented the spread of even well-known scientific ideas.

The Renaissance had, however, released the mind of Europe from many of its old fetters and destroyed many an idol that it had cherished. Whether it was partly and indirectly due to the Renaissance or whether it was in spite of it, a new spirit of objective inquiry was making itself felt, a spirit which not only challenged old-established authority, but also abstractions and vague speculations. Francis Bacon has written that 'the roads to human power and to human knowledge lie close together, and are nearly the same'. And later, in the seventeenth century, Sir Thomas Browne has said: 'But the mortallest enemy unto Knowledge, and that which hath done the greatest execution upon truth, hath been a peremptory adhesion unto Authority, and more espe-

cially, the establishing of our belief upon the dictates of Antiquity.'[1]

Akbar's century was the sixteenth, which saw in Europe the birth of dynamics, a revolutionary advance in the life of humanity. With that discovery Europe forged ahead, slowly at first, but with an ever-increasing momentum, till in the nineteenth century it shot forward and built a new world. While Europe was taking advantage of and exploiting the powers of nature, Asia, static and dormant, still carried on in the old traditional way, relying on man's toil and labour.

Why was this so ? Asia is too big and varied a place for a single answer. Each country, especially such vast countries as China and India, must be judged separately. China was certainly then and later more cultured and her people led a more civilized life than any in Europe. India, to all outward seeming, also presented the spectacle, not only of a brilliant court, but of thriving trade, commerce, manufactures, and crafts. In many respects the countries of Europe would have seemed backward and rather crude to an Indian visitor then. And yet the dynamic quality which was becoming evident in Europe was almost wholly absent in India.

A civilization decays much more from inner failure than from an external attack. It may fail because in a sense it has worked itself out and has nothing more to offer in a changing world, or because the people who represent it deteriorate in quality and can no longer support the burden worthily.

So not even Akbar made any basic difference to that social context of India, and after him the air of change and mental adventure which he had introduced subsided, and India resumed her static and unchanging life.

10 : Development of a Common Culture

Akbar had built so well that the edifice he had erected lasted for another hundred years in spite of inadequate successors. But the court continued to be brilliant and

[1] *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, bk. 1, ch. vi.

the fame of the Grand Moghul spread all over Asia and Europe. Beautiful buildings combining the old Indian ideals in architecture with a new simplicity and a nobility of line grew up in Agra and Delhi. This Indo-Moghul art was in marked contrast with the decadent, over-elaborate and heavily ornamented temples and other buildings of the North and South. Inspired architects and builders put up with loving hands the Taj Mahal at Agra.

The last of the so-called Grand Moghuls, Aurungzeb, tried to put back the clock, and in this attempt stopped it and broke it up. The Moghul rulers were strong so long as they put themselves in line with the genius of the nation and tried to work for a common nationality and a synthesis of the various elements in the country. When Aurungzeb began to oppose this movement and suppress it and to function more as a Moslem than an Indian ruler, the Moghul Empire began to break up. The work of Akbar, and to some extent his successors, was undone and the various forces that had been kept in check by Akbar's policy broke loose and challenged that empire.

The impact of the invaders from the north-west and of Islam on India had been considerable. The idea of the brotherhood of Islam and of the theoretical equality of its adherents made a powerful appeal, especially to those in the Hindu fold who were denied any semblance of equal treatment. From this ideological impact grew up various movements aiming at a religious synthesis. Many conversions also took place, but the great majority of these were from the lower castes, especially in Bengal. Some individuals belonging to the higher castes also adopted the new faith, either because of a real change of belief, or, more often, for political and economic reasons. There were obvious advantages in accepting the religion of the ruling power.

In spite of these widespread conversions, Hinduism, in all its varieties, continued as the dominant faith of the land, solid, exclusive, self-sufficient, and sure of itself. The upper castes had no doubt about their own superiority in the realm of ideas and thought and considered Islam as a rather crude approach to the problems of

philosophy and metaphysics. Even the monotheism of Islam they found in their own religion, together with monism which was the basis of much of their philosophy. Each person could take his choice of these or of more popular and simpler forms of worship. It is worth noting that, as a rule, conversions to Islam were group conversions, so powerful was the influence of the group. Among the upper castes individuals might change their religion, but lower down the scale a particular caste in a locality, or almost an entire village, would be converted. Thus their group life as well as their functions continued as before, with only minor variations as regards worship, etc. Because of this we find today particular occupations and crafts almost entirely monopolized by Moslems. Thus the class of weavers is predominantly, and in large areas wholly, Moslem. So also used to be shoe-merchants and butchers. Tailors are almost always Moslems. Various kinds of artisans and craftsmen are Moslems.

In Kashmir a long-continued process of conversion to Islam had resulted in 95 per cent of the population becoming Moslems, though they retained many of their old Hindu customs. In the middle nineteenth century the Hindu ruler of the state found that very large numbers of these people were anxious or willing to return *en bloc* to Hinduism. He sent a deputation to the pundits of Benares inquiring if this could be done. The pundits refused to countenance any such change of faith and there the matter ended.

The Moslems who came to India from outside brought no new technique or political and economic structure. Thus their influence on the economic life of India and the social structure was very little. This life continued as of old and all the people, Hindu or Moslem or others, fitted into it.

Partly because the great majority of Moslems in India were converts from Hinduism, partly because of long contact, Hindus and Moslems in India developed numerous common traits, habits, ways of living and artistic tastes, especially in Northern India—in music, painting, architecture, food, clothes, and common traditions. They lived together peacefully as one people,

joined each other's festivals and celebrations, spoke the same language, lived in more or less the same way, and faced identical economic problems.

All this intercourse and common living took place in spite of the caste system which prevented fusion. There were no intermarriages except in rare instances and even then it was not fusion but usually the transfer of a Hindu woman to the Moslem fold. Nor was there interdining, but this was not so strict. The seclusion of women prevented the development of social life. This applied even more to Moslems *inter se,* for purdah among them was stricter. Though Hindu and Moslem men met each other frequently, such opportunities were lacking to the women of both groups. The women of the nobility and upper classes were thus far more cut off from each other and developed much more marked separate ideological groups, each largely ignorant of the other.

During the Moghul period large numbers of Hindus wrote books in Persian, which was the official court language. Some of these books have become classics of their kind. At the same time Moslem scholars translated Sanskrit books into Persian and wrote in Hindi. Two of the best-known Hindi poets are Malik Mohammad Jaisi, who wrote the *Padmāvat,* and Abdul Rahim Khankhana, one of the premier nobles of Akbar's court and son of his guardian. Khankhana was a scholar in Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit, and his Hindi poetry is of a high quality. For some time he was the Commander-in-Chief of the imperial army, and yet he has written in praise and admiration of Rana Pratap of Mewar, who was continually fighting Akbar and never submitted to him.

It was this chivalrous and friendly approach on which Akbar based his policy and which many of his counsellors and ministers learned from him. He was particularly attached to the Rajputs, for he admired in them qualities which he himself possessed—reckless courage, a sense of honour and chivalry, and an adherence to the pledged word. He won over the Rajputs, but the Rajputs, for all their admirable qualities, represented a medieval type of society which was already becoming

out of date as new forces were arising. Akbar was not conscious of these new forces, for he himself was a prisoner of his own social inheritance.

11 : Aurungzeb puts the Clock back : Growth of Hindu Nationalism : Shivaji

Meanwhile the naval power of England was rising and spreading. The only Europeans that Akbar knew were the Portuguese. During his son Jehangir's time the British navy defeated the Portuguese in Indian seas and Sir Thomas Roe, an ambassador of James I of England, presented himself at Jehangir's court in 1615. He succeeded in getting permission to start factories. The Surat factory was started, and Madras was founded in 1639. For over a hundred years no one in India attached any importance to the British. The fact that the British now controlled the sea-routes and had practically driven away the Portuguese had no significance for the Moghul rulers or their advisers. When the Moghul Empire was visibly weakening during Aurungzeb's reign, the British made an organized attempt to increase their possessions in India by war. This was in 1685. Aurungzeb, weak as he was growing and beset by enemies, succeeded in defeating the British. Even before this the French had established footholds in India. The overflowing energies of Europe were spreading out in India and the East just when India's political and economic condition was rapidly declining.

It was during this period that Aurungzeb succeeded to the throne of the Moghuls after a civil war, having imprisoned his own father, Shah Jehan. Only an Akbar might have understood the situation and controlled the new forces that were rising. Perhaps even he could have only postponed the dissolution of his empire unless his curiosity and thirst for knowledge led him to understand the significance of the new techniques that were arising, and of the shift in economic conditions that was taking place. Aurungzeb, far from understanding the present, failed even to appreciate the immediate past;

he was a throw-back and, for all his ability and earnestness, he tried to undo what his predecessors had done. A bigot and an austere puritan, he was no lover of art and literature. He infuriated the great majority of his subjects by imposing the old hated *jiziya* poll-tax on the Hindus and destroying many of their temples. He offended the proud Rajputs who had been the props and pillars of the Moghul Empire. In the North he roused the Sikhs, who, from being a peaceful sect representing some kind of synthesis of Hindu and Islamic ideas, were converted by repression and persecution into a military brotherhood. Near the west coast of India, he angered the warlike Marathas, descendants of the ancient Rashtrakutas, just when a brilliant captain had risen amongst them.

All over the widespread domains of the Moghul Empire there was a ferment and a growth of revivalist sentiment, which was a mixture of religion and nationalism. That nationalism was certainly not of the modern secular type, nor did it, as a rule, embrace the whole of India in its scope. It was coloured by feudalism, by local sentiment and sectarian feeling. The Rajputs, more feudal than the rest, thought of their clan loyalties; the Sikhs, a comparatively small group in the Punjab, were absorbed in their own self-defence and could hardly look beyond the Punjab. Yet the religion itself had a strong national background and all its traditions were connected with India. 'The Indians', writes Professor Macdonell, 'are the only division of the Indo-European family which has created a great national religion—Brahminism—and a great world religion—Buddhism; while all the rest far from displaying originality in this sphere have long since adopted a foreign faith.'[1] That combination of religion and nationalism gained strength and cohesiveness from both elements, and yet its ultimate weakness and insufficiency were also derived from that mixture. For it could only be an exclusive and partial nationalism, not including the many elements in India that lay outside that religious sphere. Hindu nationalism was a natural growth from the soil of India,

[1] *A History of Sanskrit Literature* (1913), p. 7.—Ed.

but inevitably it comes in the way of the larger nationalism which rises above differences of religion or creed.

It is true that during this period of disruption, when a great empire was breaking up and many adventurers, Indian and foreign, were trying to carve out principalities for themselves, nationalism, in its present sense, was hardly in evidence at all. Each individual adventurer sought to augment his own power, each group fended for itself. Such history as we have only tells us of these adventurer, attaching more importance to them than to more significant happenings below the surface of events. Yet there are glimpses to show that it was not all adventurism, though many adventurers held the field. The Marathas, especially, had a wider conception and as they grew in power this conception also grew. All this gave strength to them. Shivaji, though he fought Aurungzeb, freely employed Moslems.

An equally important factor in the break-up of the Moghul Empire was the cracking up of the economic structure. There were repeated peasant risings, some of them on a big scale. Thus far revolts had been confined to princes and nobles and others of high degree. Quite another class was now experimenting with them.

While the empire was rent by strife and revolt, the new Maratha power was growing and consolidating itself in Western India. Shivaji, born in 1627, was the ideal guerilla leader of hardened mountaineers and his cavalry went far and wide, sacking the city of Surat, where the English had their factory, and enforcing the *chauth* tax payment over distant parts of the Moghul dominions. Shivaji was the symbol of a resurgent Hindu nationalism, drawing inspiration from the old classics, courageous, and possessing high qualities of leadership. He built up the Marathas as a strong unified fighting group, gave them a nationalist background, and made them a formidable power which broke up the Moghul Empire. He died in 1680, but the Maratha power continued to grow till it dominated India.

12 : The Marathas and the British struggle for Supremacy : Triumph of the British

The hundred years that followed the death of Aurungzeb in 1707 saw a complicated and many-sided struggle for mastery over India. The real protagonists for power in India during the eighteenth century were four : two of these were Indian and two foreign. The Indians were the Marathas and Haider Ali and his son Tipu Sultan in the South, the foreigners were the British and the French. Of these, it appeared almost inevitable, during the first half of the century, that the Marathas were destined to establish their supremacy over India as a whole and to be the successors of the Moghul Empire. Their troops appeared at the very gates of Delhi as early as 1737 and there was no power strong enough to oppose them.

Just then (in 1739) a new eruption took place in the north-west and Nadir Shah of Persia swept down to Delhi, killing and plundering, and carrying off enormous treasure including the famous Peacock Throne. It was an easy raid for him for the Delhi rulers were effete and effeminate, wholly unused to warfare, and Nadir Shah did not come into conflict with the Marathas. In a sense, his raid facilitated matters for the Marathas, who in subsequent years spread to the Punjab. Again Maratha supremacy of India was in sight.

Nadir Shah's raid had two consequences. He put an end completely to any pretensions that the Delhi Moghul rulers had to power and dominion ; henceforth they became vague shadows enjoying a ghostly sovereignty, puppets in the hands of anyone who was strong enough to hold them. To a large extent they had arrived at that stage even before Nadir Shah came ; he completed the process. And yet, so strong is the hold of tradition and long-established custom, the British East India Company, as well as others, continued to send humble presents to them in token of tribute right up to the eve of Plassey ; and even afterwards for a long time the Company considered itself and functioned as the agent

of the Delhi Emperor, in whose name money was coined till 1835.

The second consequence of Nadir Shah's raid was the separation of Afghanistan from India. Afghanistan, which for long ages past had been part of India, was now cut off and became part of Nadir Shah's dominions.

In Bengal, Clive, by promoting treason and forgery and with very little fighting, had won the battle of Plassey in 1757, a date which is sometimes said to mark the beginning of the British Empire in India. It was an unsavoury beginning and something of that bitter taste has clung to it ever since. Soon the British held the whole of Bengal and Bihar and one of the early consequences of their rule was a terrible famine which ravaged these two provinces in 1770, killing over a third of the population of this rich, vast, and densely populated area.

In South India, the struggle between the English and the French, a part of the world struggle between the two, ended in the triumph of the English, and the French were almost eliminated from India.

With the elimination of the French power from India, three contestants for supremacy remained—the Maratha confederacy, Haider Ali in the South, and the British. In spite of their victory at Plassey and their spreading out over Bengal and Bihar, few, if any, people in India then looked upon the British as a dominant power, destined to rule over the whole of India. An observer would still have given the first place to the Marathas who sprawled all over Western and Central India right up to Delhi and whose courage and fighting qualities were well known. Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan were formidable adversaries who inflicted a severe defeat on the British and came near to breaking the power of the East India Company. But they were confined to the South and did not directly affect the fortunes of India as a whole. Haider Ali was a remarkable man and one of the notable figures in Indian history. He had some kind of a national ideal and possessed the qualities of a leader with vision. Continually suffering from a painful disease, his self-discipline and capacity for hard work were astonishing. He realized, long before others did so, the

importance of sea-power and the growing menace of the British based on naval strength. He tried to organize a joint effort to drive them out and, for this purpose, sent envoys to the Marathas, the Nizam, and Shuja ud-Dowla of Oudh. But nothing came of this. He started building his own navy and, capturing the Maldive Islands, made them his headquarters for ship-building and naval activities. He died by the wayside as he was marching with his army. His son Tipu continued to strengthen his navy. Tipu also sent messages to Napoleon and to the Sultan in Constantinople.

In the North, a Sikh state under Ranjit Singh was growing up in the Punjab, to spread later to Kashmir and the North-West Frontier Province, but that was a marginal state not affecting the real struggle for supremacy. This struggle, it became clear as the eighteenth century approached its end, lay between the only two powers that counted—the Marathas and the British. All the other states and principalities were subordinate and subsidiary to these two.

Tipu Sultan of Mysore was finally defeated by the British in 1799, and that left the field clear for the final contest between the Marathas and the British East India Company. But there was rivalry amongst the Maratha chieftains, and they fought and were defeated separately by the British. They won some notable victories and especially inflicted a severe defeat on the British near Agra in 1804, but by 1818 the Maratha power was finally crushed and the great chiefs that represented it in Central India submitted and accepted the overlordship of the East India Company. The British became then the unchallenged sovereigns of a great part of India, governing the country directly or through puppet and subsidiary princes.

13 : The Backwardness of India and the Superiority of the English in Organization and Technique

Looking back over this period, it almost seems that the British succeeded in dominating India by a succes-

sion of fortuitous circumstances and lucky flukes. With remarkably little effort, considering the glittering prize, they won a great empire and enormous wealth, which helped to make them the leading power in the world. It seems easy for a slight turn in events to have taken place which would have dashed their hopes and ended their ambitions. They were defeated on many occasions —by Haider Ali and Tipu, by the Marathas, by the Sikhs, and by the Gurkhas. A little less of good fortune and they might have lost their foothold in India, or at the most held on to certain coastal territories only.

And yet a closer scrutiny reveals, in the circumstances then existing, a certain inevitability in what happened. Good fortune there certainly was, but there must be an ability to profit by good fortune. India was then in a fluid and disorganized state, following the break-up of the Moghul Empire ; for many centuries it had not been so weak and helpless. Organized power having broken down, the field was left open to adventurers and new claimants for dominion. Among these adventurers and claimants, the British, and the British alone at the time, possessed many of the qualities necessary for success. Their major disadvantage was that they were foreigners coming from a far country. Yet the very disadvantage worked in their favour, for no one took them very seriously or considered them as possible contestants for the sovereignty of India. It is extraordinary how this delusion lasted till long after Plassey, and their functioning in formal matters as the agents of the shadow Emperor at Delhi helped to further this false impression.

The East India Company had originally established itself for trading purposes, and its military establishment was meant to protect this trade. Gradually, and almost unnoticed by others, it had extended the territory under its control, chiefly by taking sides in local disputes, helping one rival against another. The Company's troops were better trained and were an asset to any side, and the Company extracted heavy payment for the help. So the Company's power grew and its military establishment increased. When it was realized that the British were playing nobody's game but their own, and were out for the political domination of

India, they had already established themselves firmly in the country.

Anti-foreign sentiment there undoubtedly was, and this grew in later years; but it was far removed from any general or widespread national feeling. The background was feudal and loyalty went to the local chief. Widespread distress, as in China during the days of the war-lords, compelled people to join any military leader who offered regular pay or opportunities of loot. The East India Company's armies largely consisted of Indian sepoys. Only the Marathas had some national sentiment. But among the Maratha chiefs themselves there was bitter rivalry, and occasionally civil war, in spite of a vague alliance under the Peshwa's leadership. At critical moments they failed to support each other, and were separately defeated.

The Marathas' ignorance of the world was appalling, and even their knowledge of India's geography was strictly limited. What is worse, they did not take the trouble to find out what was happening elsewhere and what their enemies were doing. There could be no far-sighted statesmanship or effective strategy with these limitations. Their speed of movement and mobility often surprised and unnerved the enemy, but was essentially looked upon as a series of gallant charges and little more. They were ideal guerrilla fighters. Later they reorganized their armies on more orthodox lines, with the result that what they gained in armour they lost in speed and mobility, and they could not adjust themselves easily to these new conditions. They considered themselves clever, and so they were, but it was not difficult to overreach them in peace or war, for their thought was imprisoned in an old and out-of-date framework and could not go beyond it.

If the Marathas, with their homogeneity and group patriotism, were backward in civil and military organization, much more so were the other Indian powers. The Rajputs, for all their courage, functioned in the old feudal way, romantic but thoroughly inefficient, and were rent among themselves by tribal feuds.

The Gurkhas of Nepal were splendid and disciplined soldiers, the equals, if not the superiors, of any troops

that the East India Company could produce. Although completely feudal in organization, their attachment to their homelands was great, and this sentiment made them formidable fighters in its defence. They gave a fright to the British, but made no difference to the issue of the main struggle in India.

The British thus represented a higher political and military organization, well knit together and having very able leaders. They were far better informed than their adversaries and they took full advantage of the disunity and rivalries of the Indian powers. Their command of the seas gave them safe bases and opportunities to add to their resources. Even when temporarily defeated, they could recuperate and assume the offensive again. Their possession of Bengal after Plassey gave them enormous wealth and resources to carry on their warfare with the Marathas and others, and each fresh conquest added to these resources. For the Indian powers defeat often meant a disaster which could not be remedied.

When the British had finished with the Marathas and were secure in their conquests, they turned their minds towards civil government and some kind of order was evolved. In the subsidiary States, however, the change was very slow, for in those so-called protected areas there was a permanent divorce between responsibility and power.

We are often reminded, lest we forget, that the British rescued India from chaos and anarchy. That is true in so far as they established orderly government after this period, which the Marathas have called 'the time of terror'. But that chaos and anarchy were partly at least due to the policy of the East India Company and their representatives in India. It is also conceivable that even without the good offices of the British, so eagerly given, peace and orderly government might have been established in India after the conclusion of the struggle for supremacy. Such developments had been known to have taken place in India, as in other countries, in the course of her five thousand years of history.

14 : Ranjit Singh and Jai Singh

It seems clear that India became a prey to foreign conquest because of the inadequacy of her own people and because the British represented a higher and advancing social order. The contrast between the leaders on both sides is marked ; the Indians, for all their ability, functioned in a narrow, limited sphere of thought and action, unaware of what was happening elsewhere and therefore unable to adapt themselves to changing conditions. Even if the curiosity of individuals was roused they could not break the shell which held them and their people prisoners. The Englishmen, on the other hand, were much more worldly wise, shaken up and forced to think by events in their own country and in France and America. Two great revolutions had taken place. The campaigns of the French revolutionary armies and of Napoleon had changed the whole science of war. Even the most ignorant Englishman who came to India saw different parts of the world in the course of his journey. In England itself great discoveries were being made, heralding the Industrial Revolution, though perhaps few realized their far-reaching significance at the time. But the leaven of change was working powerfully and influencing the people. Behind it all was the expansive energy which sent the British to distant lands.

It appears that during this period of terror the people generally were crushed and exhausted, passively submitting to the decrees of a malevolent fate, dazed and devoid of curiosity. There must have been many individuals who were curious and who tried to understand the new forces at play, but they were overwhelmed by the tide of events and could not influence them.

One of the individuals who was full of curiosity was Maharaja Ranjit Singh, a Jat, who had built up a kingdom in the Punjab, which subsequently spread to Kashmir and the Frontier Province. It must be remembered that Indians, as a rule, are a reserved people, and more so the intellectuals amongst them. Very few of these would have cared to associate then with the foreign military leaders and adventurers in India, many of whose

actions filled them with horror. So these intellectuals tried to preserve their dignity by keeping as far as possible from the foreign elements and met them only on formal occasions when circumstances compelled them to do so. The Indians whom Englishmen and other foreigners usually met were of the opportunist and servile class that surrounded them or the ministers, frequently corrupt and intriguing, of the Indian courts.

Ranjit Singh was not only intellectually curious and inquisitive, he was remarkably humane at a time when India and the world seethed with callousness and inhumanity. He built up a kingdom and a powerful army and yet he disliked bloodshed. 'Never was so large an empire founded by one man with so little criminality,' says Prinsep.

Another but a different type of Indian statesman was Sawai Jai Singh, of Jaipur in Rajputana. He was a brave warrior and an accomplished diplomat, but he was something much more than this. He was a mathematician and an astronomer, a scientist and a town-planner, and he was interested in the study of history.

Jai Singh built big observatories at Jaipur, Delhi, Ujjain, Benares, and Mathura. Learning through Portuguese missionaries of the progress of astronomy in Portugal, he sent his own men, with one of the missionaries, to the court of the Portuguese King Emmanuel. Emmanuel sent his envoy, Xavier de Silva, with De la Hire's tables, to Jai Singh. On comparing these with his own tables, Jai Singh came to the conclusion that the Portuguese tables were less exact and had several errors. He attributed these to the 'inferior diameters' of the instruments used.

He founded the city of Jaipur. Interested in town-planning, he collected the plans of many European cities of the time and then drew up his own plan. Many of these plans of the old European cities of the time are preserved in the Jaipur museum. The city of Jaipur was so well and wisely planned that it is still considered a model of town-planning.

Jai Singh did all this and much more in the course of a comparatively brief life and in the midst of perpetual wars and court intrigues, in which he was himself often

involved. Nadir Shah's invasion took place just four years before Jai Singh's death. Jai Singh would have been a remarkable man anywhere and at any time. The fact that he rose and functioned as a scientist in the typically feudal *milieu* of Rajputana and during one of the darkest periods of Indian history, when disruption and war and tumults filled the scene, is very significant. It shows that the spirit of scientific inquiry was not dead in India and that there was some ferment at work which might have yielded rich results if only an opportunity had been given to it to fructify.

15 : The Economic Background of India : The Two Englands

What was the economic background of India when all these far-reaching political changes were taking place ? V. Anstey has written that right up to the eighteenth century, ' Indian methods of production and of industrial and commercial organization could stand comparison with those in vogue in any other part of the world '. India was a highly developed manufacturing country exporting her manufactured products to Europe and other countries. Her banking system was efficient and well organized throughout the country, and the *hundis* or bills of exchange issued by the great business or financial houses were honoured everywhere in India, as well as in Iran, and Kabul and Herat and Tashkent and other places in Central Asia. Merchant capital had emerged and there was an elaborate network of agents, jobbers, brokers, and middlemen. The ship-building industry was flourishing and one of the flag-ships of an English admiral during the Napoleonic wars had been built by an Indian firm in India. India was, in fact, as advanced industrially, commercially, and financially as any country prior to the Industrial Revolution. No such development could have taken place unless the country had enjoyed long periods of stable and peaceful government and the highways were safe for traffic and trade.

Foreign adventurers originally came to India because of the excellence of her manufactures, which had a big

market in Europe. The chief business of the British East India Company in its early days was to trade with Indian goods in Europe, and very profitable trading it was, yielding enormous dividends. So efficient and highly organized were Indian methods of production, and such was the skill of India's artisans and craftsmen, that they could compete successfully even with the higher techniques of production which were being established in England. When the big machine age began in England, Indian goods continued to pour in and had to be stopped by very heavy durties and, in some cases, by outright prohibition.

It is clear that however highly organized and developed its pre-industrial economy was, India could not compete for long with the products of industrialized countries. It had to industrialize itself or submit to foreign economic penetration which would have led to political interference. As it happened, foreign political domination came first and this led to a rapid destruction of the economy India had built up, without anything positive or constructive taking its place. The East India Company represented both British political power and British vested interests and economic power. It was supreme and, being a company of merchants, it was intent on making money. Just when it was making money with amazing rapidity and in fantastic quantities, Adam Smith wrote about it in *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776: 'The government of an exclusive company of merchants is, perhaps, the worst of all governments for any country whatever.'[1]

England came to India. When Queen Elizabeth gave a charter to the East India Company in 1600, Shakespeare was alive and writing. In 1611 the Authorized English edition of the Bible was issued; in 1608 Milton was born. There followed Hampden and Cromwell and the political revolution. In 1660 the Royal Society of England, which was to advance the cause of science so much, was organized. A hundred years later, in 1760, the flying shuttle was invented, and there followed in

[1] *The Wealth of Nations* (Nelson, 1884), p. 234.—Ed.

quick succession the spinning jenny, the steam-engine, and the power loom.

Which of these two Englands came to India? The England of Shakespeare and Milton, of noble speech and writing and brave deed, of political revolution and the struggle for freedom, of science and technical progress, or the England of the savage penal code and brutal behaviour, of entrenched feudalism and reaction? For there were two Englands, just as in every country there are these two aspects of national character and civilization.

The two Englands live side by side, influencing each other, and cannot be separated; nor could one of them come to India forgetting completely the other. Yet in every major action one plays the leading role, dominating the other, and it was inevitable that the wrong England should play that role in India and should come in contact with and encourage the wrong India in the process.

The independence of the United States of America is more or less contemporaneous with the loss of freedom by India. Surveying the past century and a half, an Indian looks somewhat wistfully and longingly at the vast progress made by the United States during this period, and compares it with what has been done and what has not been done in his own country. It is true no doubt that the Americans have many virtues and we have many failings, that America offered a virgin field and an almost clean slate to write upon while we were cluttered up with ancient memories and traditions. And yet perhaps it is not inconceivable that if Britain had not undertaken this great burden in India and, as she tells us, endeavoured for so long to teach us the difficult art of self-government, of which we had been so ignorant, India might not only have been freer and more prosperous, but also far more advanced in science and art and all that makes life worth living.

VI : THE LAST PHASE

1 : *The Ideology of Empire*

'OUR writing of India's history is perhaps resented more than anything else we have done'—so writes an Englishman well acquainted with India and her history. It is difficult to say what Indians have resented most in the record of British rule in India; the list is long and varied. But it is true that British accounts of India's history, more especially of what is called the British period, are bitterly resented. History is almost always written by the victors and conquerors and gives their viewpoint; or, at any rate, the victors' version is given prominence and holds the field. Very probably all the early records we have of the Aryans in India, their epics and traditions, glorify the Aryans and are unfair to the people of the country whom they subdued. No individual can wholly rid himself of his racial outlook and cultural limitations, and when there is conflict between races and countries even an attempt at impartiality is considered a betrayal of one's own people.

The villain of the British in India is often a hero to Indians, and those whom the British have delighted to honour and reward are often traitors and Quislings in the eyes of the great majority of the Indian people. That taint clings to their descendants.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale once wrote in his gently ironical way of the inscrutable wisdom of Providence which had ordained the British connexion for India. Whether it was due to this inscrutable wisdom or to some process of historic destiny or just chance, the coming of the British to India brought two very different races together, but as it happened they seldom approached each other and their contacts were indirect. English literature and English political thought influenced a tiny fringe of those who had learned English. But this political thought, though dynamic in its content, had no reality in India then. The British who came to India

were not political or social revolutionaries; they were conservatives representing the most reactionary social class in England, and England was in some ways one of the most conservative countries in Europe.

The impact of Western culture on India was the impact of a dynamic society, of a 'modern' consciousness, on a static society wedded to medieval habits of thought which, however sophisticated and advanced in its own way, could not progress because of its inherent limitations. And yet, curiously enough, the agents of this historic process were not only wholly unconscious of their mission in India but, as a class, actually represented no such process. In England their class fought this historic process, but the forces opposed to them were too strong and could not be held back. In India they had a free field and were successful in applying the brakes to that very change and progress which, in the larger context, they represented. They encouraged and consolidated the position of the socially reactionary groups in India, and opposed all those who worked for political and social change. If change came it was in spite of them or as an incidental and unexpected consequence of their activities. The introduction of the steam-engine and the railway was a big step towards a change of the medieval structure, but it was intended to consolidate their rule and facilitate the exploitation of the interior of the country for their own benefit. This contradiction between the deliberate policy of the British authorities in India and some of its unintended consequences produces a certain confusion and masks that policy itself. Change came to India because of this impact of the West, but it came almost in spite of the British in India. They succeeded in slowing down the pace of that change to such an extent that even today the transition is very far from complete.

2 : The Destruction of India's Industry and the Decay of her Agriculture

The chief business of the East India Company in its early period, the very object for which it was started,

was to carry Indian manufactured goods, textiles, etc., as well as spices and the like from the East to Europe, where there was a great demand for these articles. With the developments in industrial technique in England a new class of industrial capitalists rose there, demanding a change in this policy. The British market was to be closed to Indian products and the Indian market opened to British manufactures.

To some extent this was inevitable as the older manufacturing came into conflict with the new industrial technique. But it was hastened by political and economic pressure and no attempt was made to apply the new techniques to India. Indeed every attempt was made to prevent this happening, and thus the economic development of India was arrested and the growth of the new industry prevented. Machinery could not be imported into India. A vacuum was created which could only be filled by British goods, and which led to rapidly increasing unemployment and poverty. The classic type of modern colonial economy was built up, India becoming an agricultural colony of industrial England, supplying raw materials and providing markets for England's industrial goods. This compulsory back-to-the-land movement of artisans and craftsmen led to an ever-growing disproportion between agriculture and industry; agriculture became more and more the sole business of the people because of the lack of occupations and wealth-producing activities.

India became progressively ruralized. In every progressive country there has been, during the past century, a shift of population from agriculture to industry; from village to town; in India this process was reversed, as a result of British policy. The figures are instructive and significant. In the middle of the nineteenth century about 55 per cent of the population is said to have been dependent on agriculture; recently this proportion was estimated to be 74 per cent.

This, then, is the real, the fundamental, cause of the appalling poverty of the Indian people, and it is of comparatively recent origin. Other causes that contribute to it are themselves the result of this poverty and chronic starvation and undernourishment—like disease

and illiteracy. Excessive population is unfortunate, and steps should be taken to curb it wherever necessary, but it still compares favourably with the density of population of many industrialized countries. It is only excessive for a predominantly agricultural community, and under a proper economic system the entire population can be made productive and should add to the wealth of the country. As a matter of fact great density of population exists only in special areas, like Bengal and the Gangetic Valley, and vast areas are still sparsely populated. It is worth remembering that Great Britain is more than twice as densely populated as India.

The crisis in industry spread rapidly to the land and became a permanent crisis in agriculture. Holdings became smaller and smaller, and fragmentation proceeded to an absurd and fantastic degree. The burden of agricultural debt grew and ownership of the land often passed to moneylenders. The number of landless labourers increased by the million. India was under an industrial-capitalist regime, but her economy was largely that of the pre-capitalist economy. She became a passive agent of modern industrial capitalism, suffering all its ills and with hardly any of its advantages.

It is obvious that there has been all along abundant material in India for industrial development—managerial and technical ability, skilled workers, even some capital in spite of the continuous drain from India. The historian Montgomery Martin, giving evidence before an Inquiry Committee of the British Parliament in 1840, said : 'India is as much a manufacturing country as an agriculturist ; and he who would seek to reduce her to the position of an agricultural country, seeks to lower her in the scale of civilization.'

India's ability to develop modern industry can be seen by her success in it whenever she has had the chance to build it up. Her first real chance came during the war of 1914-18 when the inflow of British goods was interrupted. She profited by it, though only to a relatively small extent because of British policy. Ever since then there has been continuous pressure on the Government to facilitate the growth of Indian industry

by removing the various barriers and special interests that come in the way.

Long subjection of a people and the denial of freedom bring many evils, and perhaps the greatest of these lies in the spiritual sphere—demoralization and sapping of the spirit of the people. It is hard to measure this, though it may be obvious. It is easier to trace and measure the economic decay of a nation, and as we look back on British economic policy in India, it seems that the present poverty of the Indian people is the ineluctable consequence of it.

3 : India becomes for the first time a political and economic Appendage of another Country

The establishment of British rule in India was an entirely novel phenomenon for her, not comparable with any other invasion or political or economic change. 'India had been conquered before, but by invaders who settled within her frontiers and made themselves part of her life' (like the Normans in England or the Manchus in China). 'She had never lost her independence, never been enslaved. That is to say, she had never been drawn into a political and economic system whose centre of gravity lay outside her soil, never been subjected to a ruling class which was, and which remained, permanently alien in origin and character.' [1]

Every previous ruling class, whether it had originally come from outside or was indigenous, had accepted the structural unity of India's social and economic life and tried to fit into it. It had become Indianized and had struck roots in the soil of the country. The new rulers were entirely different, with their base elsewhere, and between them and the average Indian there was a vast and unbridgeable gulf—a difference in tradition, in outlook; in income, and ways of living. The early Britishers in India, rather cut off from England, adopted many

[1] K. S. Shelvankar, *The Problem of India* (Penguin Special, 1940).

Indian ways of living. But it was a superficial approach and even this was deliberately abandoned with the improvement in communications between India and England. It was felt that the British ruling class must maintain its prestige in India by keeping aloof, exclusive, apart from Indians, living in a superior world of its own. There were two worlds: the world of British officials and the world of India's millions, and there was nothing in common between them except a common dislike for each other.

The village community, which had so far been the basis of Indian economy, was disintegrated, losing both its economic and administrative functions. In 1830, Sir Charles Metcalfe, one of the ablest of British officials in India, described these communities in words which have often been quoted: 'The village communities are little republics having nearly everything they want within themselves; and almost independent of foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. This union of the village communities, each one forming a separate little state in itself . . . is in a high degree conducive to their happiness, and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence.'

Big landowners were created by the British after their own English pattern, chiefly because it was far easier to deal with a few individuals than with a vast peasantry. The village community was deprived of all control over the land and its produce; what had always been considered as the chief interest and concern of that community now became the private property of the newly created landowners. This led to the breakdown of the joint life and corporate character of the community, and the co-operative system of services and functions began to disappear gradually.

4 : Contradictions of British Rule in India : Ram Mohan Roy : Sir William Jones : English Education in Bengal

One remarkable contradiction meets us at every turn in considering the record of British rule in India. The

British became dominant in India, and the foremost power in the world, because they were the heralds of the new big-machine industrial civilization. They represented a new historic force which was going to change the world, and were thus, unknown to themselves, the forerunners and representatives of change and revolution ; and yet they deliberately tried to prevent change, except in so far as this was necessary to consolidate their position and help them in exploiting the country and its people to their own advantage.

Individual Englishmen, educationists, Orientalists, journalists, missionaries, and others played an important part in bringing Western culture to India, and in their attempts to do so often came into conflict with their own Government. That Government feared the effects of the spread of modern education and put many obstacles in its way, and yet it was due to the pioneering efforts of able and earnest Englishmen, who gathered enthusiastic groups of Indian students around them, that English thought and literature and political tradition were introduced to India.[1] Even the British Government, in spite of its dislike of education, was compelled by circumstances to arrange for the training and production of clerks for its growing establishment. It could not afford to bring out from England large numbers of people to serve in this subordinate capacity. So education grew slowly and, though it was a limited and perverted education, it opened the doors and windows of the mind to new ideas and dynamic thoughts.

Changes crept in gradually, influencing the Indian mind and giving rise to the 'modern' consciousness. Only a small group was directly influenced by the thought of Europe, for India clung to her own philosophic background, considering it superior to that of the West. The real impact and influence of the West were on the practical side of life which was obviously superior to

[1] When I say Englishmen I include, of course, people from the whole of Great Britain and Ireland, though I know this is improper and incorrect. But I dislike the word Britisher, and even that probably does not include the Irish. My apologies to the Irish, the Scots, and the Welsh. In India they have all functioned alike and have been looked upon as one indistinguishable group.

the Eastern. The new techniques—the railway train, the printing press, other machinery, more efficient ways of warfare—could not be ignored, and these came up against old methods of thought almost unawares, by indirect approaches, creating a conflict in the mind of India. The most obvious and far-reaching change was the break-up of the agrarian system and the introduction of conceptions of private property and landlordism. Money economy had crept in and 'land became a marketable commodity. What had once been held rigid by custom was dissolved by money'.

Bengal witnessed and experienced all these agrarian, technical, educational, and intellectual changes long before any other considerable part of India, for Bengal had a clear half-century of British rule before it spread over wider areas. Previous to British rule Bengal had been an outlying province of the Moghul Empire, important but still rather cut off from the centre. During the early medieval period many debased forms of worship and of Tantric philosophy and practices had flourished among the Hindus there. Then came many Hindu reform movements affecting social customs and laws and even changing somewhat the well-recognized rules of inheritance elsewhere. Chaitanya, a great scholar who became a man of faith and emotion, established a form of Vaishnavism, based on faith, and influenced greatly the people of Bengal. The Bengalis developed a curious mixture of high intellectual attainments and equally strong emotionalism. This tradition of loving faith and service of humanity was represented in Bengal in the second half of the nineteenth century by another remarkable man of saintly character, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa; in his name an order of service was established which has an unequalled record in humanitarian relief and social work. Full of the ideal of the patient loving service of the Franciscans of old, and quite unostentatious, efficient, rather like the Quakers, the members of the Ramakrishna Mission carry on their hospitals and educational establishments and engage in relief work, whenever any calamity occurs, all over India and even outside.

Ramakrishna represented the old Indian tradition.

Before him, in the eighteenth century, another towering personality had risen in Bengal, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who was a new type combining in himself the old learning and the new. Deeply versed in Indian thought and philosophy, a scholar in Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic, he was a product of the mixed Hindu-Moslem culture that was then dominant among the cultured classes of India. The coming of the British to India and their superiority in many ways led his curious and adventurous mind to find out what their cultural roots were. He learnt English but this was not enough; he learnt Greek, Latin, and Hebrew also to discover the sources of the religion and culture of the West. He was also attracted by science and the technical aspects of Western civilization, though at that time these technical changes were not so obvious as they subsequently became. Being of a philosophical and scholarly bent, Ram Mohan Roy inevitably went to the older literatures. Describing him, Monier-Williams, the Orientalist, has said that he was 'perhaps the first earnest-minded investigator of the science of Comparative Religion that the world has produced'; and yet, at the same time, he was anxious to modernize education and take it out of the grip of the old scholasticism. Even in those early days he was in favour of the scientific method, and he wrote to the Governor-General emphasizing the need for education in 'mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy, and other useful sciences'.

He was more than a scholar and an investigator; he was a reformer above all. Influenced in his early days by Islam and later, to some extent, by Christianity, he stuck nevertheless to the foundations of his own faith. But he tried to reform that faith and rid it of abuses and the evil practices that had become associated with it. It was largely because of his agitation for the abolition of suttee that the British Government prohibited it. This suttee, or the immolation of women on the funeral pyre of their husbands, was never widespread. But rare instances continued to occur among the upper classes. Probably the practice was brought to India originally by the Scytho-Tartars, among whom the custom prevailed of vassals and liegemen killing themselves

on the death of their lord. In early Sanskrit literature the suttee custom is denounced. Akbar tried hard to stop it, and the Marathas also were opposed to it.

Ram Mohan Roy and the Tagores and others studied English privately. There were no English schools or colleges and the Government's policy was definitely opposed to the teaching of English to Indians. In 1781 the Hindu College and the Calcutta Madrasa were started by Government in Calcutta, the former for Sanskrit studies and the latter for Arabic. In 1791 a Sanskrit College was started in Benares. Probably in the second decade of the nineteenth century some missionary schools were teaching English. During the twenties a school of thought arose in Government circles in favour of the teaching of English, but this was opposed. However, as an experimental measure some English classes were attached to the Arabic school in Delhi and to some institutions in Calcutta. The final decision in favour of the teaching of English was embodied in Macaulay's Minute on Education of February, 1835. The Presidency College was later started in Calcutta. In 1857, the Universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay began their career.

If the British Government in India was reluctant to teach English to Indians, Brahmin scholars objected even more, but for different reasons, to teach Sanskrit to Englishmen. When Sir William Jones, already a linguist and a scholar, came to India as a Judge of the Supreme Court, he expressed his desire to learn Sanskrit. But no Brahmin would agree to teach the sacred language to a foreigner and an intruder, even though handsome rewards were offered. Jones ultimately, with considerable difficulty, got hold of a non-Brahmin Vaidya or medical practitioner who agreed to teach, but on his own peculiar and stringent conditions. Jones agreed to every stipulation, so great was his eagerness to learn the ancient language of India. Sanskrit fascinated him and especially the discovery of the old Indian drama. It was through his writings and translations that Europe first had a glimpse of some of the treasures of Sanskrit literature. In 1784 Sir William Jones established the Bengal Asiatic Society which later became the Royal Asiatic Society. To Jones, and to the many other

European scholars, India owes a deep debt of gratitude for the rediscovery of her past literature. Much of it was known of course throughout every age, but the knowledge had become more and more confined to select and exclusive groups, and the dominance of Persian, as the language of culture, had diverted people's minds from it. The search for manuscripts brought out many a little-known work and the application of modern critical methods of scholarship gave a new background to the vast literature that was revealed.

There was no difficulty in dealing with the well-known and established languages, but the missionaries went further and tackled some of the minor and undeveloped languages and gave them shape and form, compiling grammars and dictionaries for them. They even laboured at the dialects of the primitive hill and forest tribes and reduced them to writing. The desire of the Christian missionaries to translate the Bible into every possible language thus resulted in the development of many Indian languages. Christian mission work in India has not always been admirable or praiseworthy, but in this respect, as well as in the collection of folklore, it has undoubtedly been of great service to India.

English education brought a widening of the Indian horizon, an admiration for English literature and institutions, a revolt against some customs and aspects of Indian life, and a growing demand for political reform. The new professional classes took the lead in political agitation, which consisted chiefly in sending representations to Government. English-educated people in the professions and the services formed in effect a new class, which was to grow all over India, a class influenced by Western thought and ways and rather cut off from the mass of the population. In 1852 the British Indian Association was started in Calcutta. This was one of the forerunners of the Indian National Congress, and yet a whole generation was to pass before the Revolt of 1857-8, its suppression and its consequences. The great difference between the state of Bengal and that of Northern and Central India in the middle of the century is brought out by the fact that while in Bengal the new intelligentsia (chiefly Hindu) had been influenced by

English thought and literature and looked to England for political constitutional reform, the other areas were seething with the spirit of revolt.

The revolt of 1857-8 flared up and was crushed, but Bengal was hardly touched by it. Throughout the nineteenth century the new English-educated class, mainly Hindu, looked up with admiration towards England and hoped to advance with her help and in co-operation with her. There was a cultural renaissance and a remarkable growth of the Bengali language, and the leaders of Bengal stood out as the leaders of political India.

'Our direct contact with the larger world of men was linked up with the contemporary history of the English people whom we came to know in those earlier days. It was mainly through their mighty literature that we formed our ideas with regard to these newcomers to our Indian shores. In those days the type of learning that was served out to us was neither plentiful nor diverse, nor was the spirit of scientific inquiry very much in evidence. Thus their scope being strictly limited, the educated of those days had recourse to English language and literature. Their days and nights were eloquent with the stately declamations of Burke, with Macaulay's long-rolling sentences; discussions centred upon Shakespeare's drama and Byron's poetry and above all upon the large-hearted liberalism of the nineteenth-century English politics.

'At the time, though tentative attempts were being made to gain our national independence, at heart we had not lost faith in the generosity of the English race. This belief was so firmly rooted in the sentiments of our leaders as to lead them to hope that the victor would of his own grace pave the path to freedom for the vanquished. This belief was based upon the fact that England at the time provided a shelter to all those who had to flee from persecution in their own country. Political martyrs who had suffered for the honour of their people were accorded unreserved welcome at the hands of the English. I was impressed by this evidence of liberal humanity in the character of the English and thus I was led to set them on the pedestal of my highest respect. This generosity in their national character had

not yet been vitiated by Imperialist pride. About this time, as a boy in England, I had the opportunity of listening to the speeches of John Bright, both in and outside Parliament. The large-hearted, radical liberalism of those speeches, overflowing all narrow national bounds, had made so deep an impression on my mind that something of it lingers even today, even in these days of graceless disillusionment.

'Certainly that spirit of abject dependence upon the charity of our rulers was no matter of pride. What was remarkable, however, was the wholehearted way in which we gave our recognition to human greatness even when it revealed itself in the foreigner. The best and noblest gifts of humanity cannot be the monopoly of a particular race or country; its scope may not be limited nor may it be regarded as the miser's hoard buried underground. That is why English literature which nourished our minds in the past, does even now convey its deep resonance to the recesses of our heart.'

5 : *The Great Revolt of 1857 : Racialism*

After nearly a century of British rule, Bengal had accommodated itself to it; the peasantry devastated by famine and crushed by new economic burdens, the new intelligentsia looking to the West and hoping that progress would come through English liberalism. So also, more or less in the South and in Western India, in Madras and Bombay. But in the upper provinces there was no such submission or accommodation and the spirit of revolt was growing, especially among the feudal chiefs and their followers. Even in the masses discontent and an intense anti-British feeling were widespread.

In May, 1857, the Indian army at Meerut mutinied. The revolt had been secretly and well organized but a premature outburst rather upset the plans of the leaders. It was much more than a military mutiny and it spread rapidly and assumed the character of a popular rebellion and a war of Indian independence. As such a popular rebellion of the masses it was confined to Delhi, the United Provinces (as they are now called), and parts

of Central India and Bihar. Essentially it was a feudal outburst, headed by feudal chiefs and their followers and aided by the widespread anti-foreign sentiment. Inevitably it looked up to the relic of the Moghul dynasty, still sitting in the Delhi palace, but feeble and old and powerless. Both Hindus and Moslems took full part in the revolt.

This revolt strained British rule to the utmost and it was ultimately suppressed with Indian help. It brought out all the inherent weaknesses of the old regime, which was making its last despairing effort to drive out foreign rule. The feudal chiefs had the sympathy of the masses over large areas, but they were incapable, unorganized and with no constructive ideal or community of interest. They had already played their role in history and there was no place for them in the future. Many of their number, in spite of their sympathies, thought discretion the better part of valour, and stood apart waiting to see on which side victory lay. Many played the part of Quislings. The Indian Princes as a whole kept aloof or helped the British, fearing to risk what they had acquired or managed to retain. There was hardly any national and unifying sentiment among the leaders and a mere anti-foreign feeling, coupled with a desire to maintain their feudal privileges, was a poor substitute for this.

The revolt threw up some fine guerrilla leaders. Feroz Shah, a relative of Bahadur Shah of Delhi, was one of them, but most brilliant of all was Tantia Topi who harassed the British for many months even when defeat stared him in the face. Ultimately when he crossed the Narbada river into the Maratha regions, hoping to receive aid and welcome from his own people, there was no welcome, and he was betrayed. One name stands out above others and is revered still in popular memory, the name of Lakshmi Bai, Rani of Jhansi, a girl twenty years of age, who died fighting. 'Best and bravest' of the rebel leaders, she was called by the English general who opposed her.

British memorials of the Mutiny have been put up in Cawnpore and elsewhere. There is no memorial for the Indians who died. It is hateful to have to refer to this

past history, but the spirit behind those events did not end with them. It survived, and whenever a crisis comes or nerves give way, it is in evidence again. The world knows of much that has happened since the days of the Mutiny, much that has taken place even in recent years and in our time, which has embittered the present generation. Imperialism and the domination of one people over another is bad, and so is racialism. But imperialism plus racialism can only lead to horror and ultimately to the degradation of all concerned with them. The future historians of England will have to consider how far England's decline from her proud eminence was due to her imperialism and racialism, which corrupted her public life and made her forget the lessons of her own history and literature.

Slowly India recovered from the after-effects of the revolt of 1857-8. Despite British policy, powerful forces were at work changing India, and a new social consciousness was arising. The political unity of India, contact with the West, technological advances, and even the misfortune of a common subjection, led to new currents of thought, the slow development of industry, and the rise of a new movement for national freedom. The awakening of India was twofold : she looked to the West and, at the same time, she looked at herself and her own past.

6 : Reform and other Movements among Hindus and Moslems

The real impact of the West came to India in the nineteenth century through technical changes and their dynamic consequences. In the realm of ideas also there was shock and change, a widening of the horizon which had so long been confined within a narrow shell. The first reaction, limited to the small English-educated class, was one of admiration and acceptance of almost everything Western. Repelled by some of the social customs and practices of Hinduism, many Hindus were attracted towards Christianity, and some notable conversions took place in Bengal. An attempt was therefore made by

Raja Ram Mohan Roy to adapt Hinduism to this new environment and he started the Brahmo Samaj on a more or less rationalist and social reform basis. His successor, Keshab Chander Sen, gave it a more Christian outlook. The Brahmo Samaj influenced the rising middle classes of Bengal but as a religious faith it remained confined to few, among whom, however, were some outstanding persons and families. But even these families, though ardently interested in social and religious reform, tended to go back to the old Indian philosophic ideals of the Vedanta.

Elsewhere in India also the same tendencies were at work and dissatisfaction arose at the rigid social forms and protean character of Hinduism as practised. One of the most notable reform movements was started in the second half of the nineteenth century by a Gujarati, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, but it took root among the Hindus of the Punjab. This was the Arya Samaj and its slogan was 'Back to the Vedas'. This slogan really meant an elimination of developments of the Aryan faith since the Vedas; the Vedanta philosophy as it subsequently developed, the central conception of monism, the pantheistic outlook, as well as popular and cruder developments, were all alike severely condemned. Even the Vedas were interpreted in a particular way. The Arya Samaj was a reaction to the influence of Islam and Christianity, more especially the former. It was a crusading and reforming movement from within, as well as a defensive organization for protection against external attacks. It introduced proselytization into Hinduism and thus tended to come into conflict with other proselytizing religions. It is significant that it spread chiefly among the middle-class Hindus of the Punjab and the United Provinces. At one time it was considered by the Government as a politically revolutionary movement, but the large number of Government servants in it made it thoroughly respectable. It has done very good work in the spread of education both among boys and girls, in improving the condition of women, and in raising the status and standards of the depressed classes.

About the same period as Swami Dayananda, a

different type of person lived in Bengal and his life influenced many of the new English-educated classes. He was Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, a simple man, no scholar but a man of faith, and not interested in social reform as such. He was in the direct line with Chaitanya and other Indian saints. Essentially religious and yet broad-minded, in his search for self-realization he went to Moslem and Christian mystics and lived with them for years, following their strict routines. He settled down at Kalighat, in Calcutta, and his extraordinary personality and character gradually attracted attention. People who went to visit him, and some who were even inclined to scoff at this simple man of faith, were powerfully influenced and many who had been completely Westernized felt that here was something they had missed. Stressing the essentials of religious faith, he linked up the various aspects of the Hindu religion and philosophy and seemed to represent all of them in his own person. Indeed he brought within his fold other religions also. Opposed to all sectarianism, he emphasized that all roads lead to truth. He was like some of the saints we read about in the past records of Asia and Europe. Difficult to understand in the context of modern life, and yet fitting into India's many-coloured pattern and accepted and revered by many of her people as a man with a touch of the divine fire about him, his personality impressed itself on all who saw him, and many who never saw him have been influenced by the story of his life. Among these latter is Romain Rolland who has written a story of his life and that of his chief disciple, Swami Vivekananda.

Vivekananda, together with his brother disciples, founded the non-sectarian Ramakrishna Mission of service. Rooted in the past and full of pride in India's prestige, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present. He was a powerful orator in Bengali and English and a graceful writer of Bengali prose and poetry. He was a fine figure of a man, imposing, full of poise and dignity, sure of himself and his mission, and at the same time full of a dynamic and fiery energy and a passion to push India forward. He

came as a tonic to the depressed and demoralized Hindu mind and gave it self-reliance and some roots in the past. He attended the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, spent over a year in the U.S.A., travelled across Europe, going as far as Athens and Constantinople, and visited Egypt, China, and Japan. Wherever he went, he created a minor sensation not only by his presence but by what he said and how he said it. Having seen this Hindu *sanyāsi* once it was difficult to forget him or his message. In America he was called the 'cyclonic Hindu'. He was himself greatly influenced by his travels in Western countries; he admired British perseverance and the vitality and spirit of equality of the American people. 'America is the best field in the world to carry on any idea,' he wrote to a friend in India.[1] But he was not impressed by the manifestations of religion in the West and his faith in the Indian philosophical and spiritual background became firmer. India, in spite of her degradation, still represented to him the light.

He preached the monism of the Advaita philosophy of the Vedanta and was convinced that only this could be the future religion of thinking humanity. For the Vedanta was not only spiritual but rational and in harmony with scientific investigations of external nature. 'This universe has not been created by any extra-cosmic God, nor is it the work of any outside genius. It is self-creating, self-dissolving, self-manifesting, One Infinite Existence, the Brahman.'[2] The Vedanta ideal was of the solidarity of man and his inborn divine nature; to see God in man is the real God-vision; man is the greatest of all beings. India had fallen because she had narrowed herself, gone into her shell and lost touch with other nations, and thus sunk into a state of 'mummified' and 'crystallized' civilization. Caste, which was necessary and desirable in its early forms, and meant to develop individuality and freedom, had become a monstrous degradation, the opposite of what it was meant to be, and had crushed the masses. Caste

[1] Complete Works, Vol. VIII, p. 321.—Ed.
[2] Complete Works, Vol. III, pp. 423-4.—Ed.

was a form of social organization which was and should be kept separate from religion. Social organizations should change with the changing times. Passionately, Vivekananda condemned the meaningless metaphysical discussions and arguments about ceremonials and especially the touch-me-notism of the upper castes. 'Our religion is in the kitchen. Our God is the cooking-pot, and our religion is: "don't touch me, I am holy."'[1]

Vivekananda spoke of many things but the one constant refrain of his speech and writing was *abhay*—be fearless, be strong. For him man was no miserable sinner, but a part of divinity; why should he be afraid of anything? 'If there is a sin in the world it is weakness; avoid all weakness, weakness is sin, weakness is death.' 'You must beware of superstition. I would rather see every one of you rank atheists than superstitious fools, for the atheist is alive, and you can make something out of him. But if superstition enters, the brain is gone, the brain is softening, degradation has seized upon the life. . . . Mystery-mongering and superstition are always signs of weakness.'[2]

So Vivekananda thundered from Cape Comorin on the southern tip of India to the Himalayas, and he wore himself out in the process, dying in 1902 when he was thirty-nine years of age.

A contemporary of Vivekananda, and yet belonging much more to a later generation, was Rabindranath Tagore. The Tagore family had played a leading part in various reform movements in Bengal during the nineteenth century. There were men of spiritual stature in it and fine writers and artists, but Rabindranath towered above them all, and indeed all over India his position gradually became one of unchallenged supremacy. His long life of creative activity covered two entire generations and he seems almost of our present day. He was no politician, but he was too sensitive and devoted to the freedom of the Indian people to remain always in his ivory tower of poetry and song. Again and again he stepped out of it, when he could tolerate

[1] Complete Works, Vol. III, p. 167.
[2] Complete Works, Vol. III, pp. 278-9.

some development no longer, and in prophetic language warned the British Government or his own people. He played a prominent part in the Swadeshi movement that swept through Bengal in the first decade of the twentieth century, and again when he gave up his knighthood at the time of the Amritsar massacre. His constructive work in the field of education, quietly begun, has already made Santiniketan one of the focal points of Indian culture. His influence over the mind of India, and especially of successive rising generations, has been tremendous. Not Bengali only, the language in which he himself wrote, but all the modern languages of India have been moulded partly by his writings. More than any other Indian, he has helped to bring into harmony the ideals of the East and the West, and broadened the bases of Indian nationalism. He has been India's internationalist *par excellence*, believing and working for international co-operation, taking India's message to other countries and bringing their message to his own people. And yet with all his internationalism, his feet have always been planted firmly on India's soil and his mind has been saturated with the wisdom of the Upanishads. It was Tagore's immense service to India, as it has been Gandhi's in a different plane, that he forced the people in some measure out of their narrow grooves of thought and made them think of broader issues affecting humanity. Tagore was the great humanist of India.

Tagore and Gandhi have undoubtedly been the two outstanding and dominating figures of India in this first half of the twentieth century. It is instructive to compare and contrast them. No two persons could be so different from one another in their make-up or temperaments. Tagore, the aristocratic artist, turned democrat with proletarian sympathies, represented essentially the cultural tradition of India, the tradition of accepting life in the fullness thereof and going through it with song and dance. Gandhi, more a man of the people, almost the embodiment of the Indian peasant, represented the other ancient tradition of India, that of renunciation and asceticism. And yet Tagore was primarily the man of thought, Gandhi of concentrated and ceaseless activity.

Both, in their different ways, had a world outlook, and both were at the same time wholly Indian. They seemed to represent different but harmonious aspects of India and to complement one another.

Tagore and Gandhi bring us to our present age. But we were considering an earlier period and the effect produced on the people, and especially the Hindus, by the stress laid by Vivekananda and others on the past greatness of India and their pride in it. Vivekananda himself was careful to warn his people not to dwell too much on the past, but to look to the future. 'When, O Lord,' he wrote, 'shall our land be free from this eternal dwelling upon the past?' But he himself and others had evoked that past, and there was a glamour in it, and no getting away from it.

This looking back to the past, and finding comfort and sustenance there, was helped by a renewed study of ancient literature and history, and later by the story of the Indian colonies in eastern seas, as this unfolded itself. Mrs Annie Besant was a powerful influence in adding to the confidence of the Hindu middle classes in their spiritual and national heritage. There was a spiritual and religious element about all this, and yet there was a strong political background to it. The rising middle classes were politically inclined and were not so much in search of a religion; but they wanted some cultural roots to cling on to, something that gave them assurance of their own worth, something that would reduce the sense of frustration and humiliation that foreign conquest and rule had produced. In every country with a growing nationalism there is this search apart from religion, this tendency to go to the past. Iran, without in any way weakening in its religious faith, has deliberately gone back to its pre-Islamic days of greatness and utilized this memory to strengthen its present-day nationalism. So also in other countries. The past of India, with all its cultural variety and greatness, was a common heritage of all the Indian people, Hindu, Moslem, Christian, and others, and their ancestors had helped to build it. The fact of subsequent conversion to other faiths did not deprive them of this heritage; just as the Greeks, after their conversion to Christianity,

did not lose their pride in the mighty achievements of their ancestors, or the Italians in the great days of the Roman Republic and early empire. If all the people of India had been converted to Islam or Christianity, her cultural heritage would still have remained to inspire them and give them that poise and dignity which a long record of civilized existence gives a people.

Indeed, old philosophy and literature, art and history, did bring some comfort. Ram Mohan Roy, Dayananda, Vivekananda, and others had started new movements of thought. While they drank from the rich streams of English literature, their minds were also full of ancient sages and heroes of India, their thoughts and deeds, and of the myths and traditions which they had imbibed from their childhood.

Much of this was common to the Moslem masses, who were well acquainted with these traditions. But it began to be felt, especially by the Moslem upper classes, that it was not quite proper for them to associate themselves with these semi-religious traditions, that any encouragement of them would be against the spirit of Islam. They searched for their national roots elsewhere. To some extent they found them in the Afghan and Moghul periods of India, but this was not quite enough to fill the vacuum. Those periods were common for Hindus and Moslems alike, and the sense of foreign intrusion had disappeared from Hindu minds. The Moghul rulers were looked upon as Indian national rulers, though in the case of Aurungzeb there was a difference of opinion. It is significant that Akbar, whom the Hindus especially admired, has not been approved of in recent years by some Moslems. Last year[1] the 400th anniversary of his birth was celebrated in India. All classes of people, including many Moslems, joined, but the Moslem League kept aloof because Akbar was a symbol of India's unity.

Thus Indian Moslems sought to derive some psychological satisfaction from a contemplation of Islam's past greatness, chiefly in other countries, and in the fact of the continuance of Turkey as an independent Moslem power, practically the only one left. This feeling was

[1] That is, 1944.—Ed.

not opposed to or in conflict with Indian nationalism; indeed many Hindus admired and were well acquainted with Islamic history. They sympathized with Turkey because they considered the Turks as Asiatic victims of European aggression. Yet the emphasis was different, and in their case that feeling did not supply a psychological need as it did in the case of the Moslems.

After the Mutiny, the Indian Moslems had hesitated which way to turn. The British Government had deliberately repressed them to an even greater degree than it had repressed the Hindus, and this repression had especially affected those sections of the Moslems from which the new middle class, the bourgeoisie, might have been drawn. They felt down-and-out and were intensely anti-British as well as conservative. British policy towards them underwent a gradual change in the seventies and became more favourable. This change was essentially due to the policy of balance and counterpoise which the British Government had consistently pursued.

None the less many prominent Moslems joined the National Congress. British policy became definitely pro-Moslem, or rather in favour of those elements among the Moslems who were opposed to the national movement. But early in the twentieth century the tendency towards nationalism and political activity became more noticeable among the younger generation of Moslems. To divert this and provide a safe channel for it, the Moslem League was started in 1906 under the inspiration of the British Government and the leadership of one of its chief supporters, the Aga Khan. The League had two principal objects: loyalty to the British Government and the safeguarding of Moslem interests.

Abul Kalam Azad attacked this stronghold of conservatism and anti-nationalism not directly but by spreading ideas which undermined the Aligarh tradition. This very youthful writer and journalist caused a sensation in Moslem intellectual circles and, though the elders frowned upon him, his words created a ferment in the minds of the younger generation. That ferment had already started because of events in Turkey, Egypt, and Iran, as well as the development of the Indian nationalist

movement. Azad gave a definite trend to it by pointing out that there was no conflict between Islam and sympathy for Islamic countries and Indian nationalism. This helped in bringing the Moslem League nearer to the Congress. Azad had himself joined the League, whilst yet a boy, at its first session in 1906.

This, I imagine, was the background out of which, in recent years, arose the cry for a division of India. There were many reasons, many contributory causes, errors and mistakes on every side, and especially the deliberate separatist policy of the British Government. But behind all these was this psychological background, which itself was produced, apart from certain historical causes, by the delay in the development of a Moslem middle class in India.

7 : *Heavy Industry begins : Separate Electorates*

During this period many changes came and, chief among them, an industrial proletariat was growing up in India ; it was unorganized and helpless, and the terribly low standards of the peasantry, from which it came, prevented wage increases and improvement.

Moslem young men were also being affected by the Russian and Irish Revolutions and by the examples of terrorism in Bengal. The Aligarh College had tried to check this tendency and now, under Government inspiration, the Aga Khan and others started the Moslem League to provide a political platform for Moslems and thus keep them away from the Congress. More important still, and of vital significance to India's future development, it was decided to introduce separate electorates for Moslems. Henceforward Moslems could only stand for election and be elected by separate Moslem electorates. A political barrier was created round them isolating them from the rest of India and reversing the unifying and amalgamating process which had been going on for centuries, and which was inevitably being speeded up by technological developments. This barrier was a small one at first, for the electorates were very limited, but with every extension of the franchise it grew

and affected the whole structure of public and social life, like some canker which corrupted the entire system. It poisoned municipal and local self-government and ultimately it led to fantastic divisions. There came into existence (much later) separate Moslem trade unions and students' organizations and merchants' chambers. Because the Moslems were backward in all these activities, these organizations were not real organic growths from below, but were artificially created from above, and their leadership was held by the old semi-feudal type of person. Thus, to some extent, the Moslem middle classes and even the masses were isolated from the currents of growth which were influencing the rest of India. There were vested interests enough in India created or preserved by the British Government. Now an additional and powerful vested interest was created by separate electorates.

Lord Morley was the Secretary of State for India when these separate electorates were introduced. He resisted them, but ultimately agreed under pressure from the Viceroy. In the Montagu-Chelmsford Report on Indian Constitutional Reform (1918) the dangers of these communal electorates were again emphasized: 'Division by creeds and classes means the creation of political camps organized against each other, and teaches men to think as partisans and not as citizens. . . . We regard any system of communal electorates, therefore, as a very serious hindrance to the development of the self-governing principle.'

8 : Helplessness of the Middle Classes : Gandhi comes

World War I came. Politics were at a low ebb, chiefly because of the split in the Congress between the two sections, the so-called extremists and the moderates, and because of war-time restrictions and regulations. Yet one tendency was marked: the rising middle class among the Moslems was growing more nationally minded and was pushing the Moslem League towards the Congress. They even joined hands.

Yet what could we do ? How could we pull India out of this quagmire of poverty and defeatism which sucked her in ? Not for a few years of excitement and agony and suspense, but for long generations our people had offered their 'blood and toil, tears and sweat'. And this process had eaten its way deep into the body and soul of India, poisoning every aspect of our corporate life, like that fell disease which consumes the tissues of the lungs and kills slowly but inevitably.

And then Gandhi came. He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths, like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes, like a whirlwind that upset many things, but most of all the working of people's minds. He did not descend from the top ; he seemed to emerge from the millions of India, speaking their language and incessantly drawing attention to them and their appalling condition. Get off the backs of these peasants and workers, he told us, all you who live by their exploitation ; get rid of the system that produces this poverty and misery. Political freedom took new shape then and acquired a new content. Much that he said we only partially accepted or sometimes did not accept at all. But all this was secondary. The essence of his teaching was fearlessness and truth, and action allied to these, always keeping the welfare of the masses in view. The greatest gift for an individual or a nation, so we had been told in our ancient books, was *abhaya,* fearlessness, not merely bodily courage but the absence of fear from the mind. Janaka and Yajnavalkya had said, at the dawn of our history, that it was the function of the leaders of a people to make them fearless. But the dominant impulse in India under British rule was that of fear—pervasive, oppressing, strangling fear ; fear of the army, the police, the widespread secret service ; fear of the official class ; fear of laws meant to suppress and of prison ; fear of the landlord's agent ; fear of the moneylender ; fear of unemployment and starvation, which were always on the threshold. It was against this all-pervading fear that Gandhi's quiet and determined voice was raised : Be not afraid. Was it so simple as all that ? Not quite. And yet fear builds

its phantoms which are more fearsome than reality itself, and reality, when calmly analysed and its consequences willingly accepted, loses much of its terror.

Gandhi influenced millions of people in India in varying degrees; some changed the whole texture of their lives, others were only partly affected, or the effect wore off; and yet not quite, for some part of it could not be wholly shaken off. Different people reacted differently and each will give his own answer to this question. Some might well say almost in the words of Alcibiades about Socrates: 'For the moment I hear him speak I am smitten by a kind of sacred rage, worse than any Corybant, and my heart jumps into my mouth and the tears start into my eyes—Oh, and not only me, but lots of other men.'

9 : The Congress becomes a Dynamic Organization under Gandhi's Leadership

Gandhi for the first time entered the Congress organization and immediately brought about a complete change in its constitution. He made it democratic and a mass organization. Democratic it had been previously also, but it had so far been limited in franchise and restricted to the upper classes. Now the peasants rolled in and, in its new garb, it began to assume the look of a vast agrarian organization with a strong sprinkling of the middle classes. This agrarian character was to grow. Industrial workers also came in, but as individuals and not in their separate organized capacity.

Action was to be the basis and objective of this organization, action based on peaceful methods. Thus far the alternatives had been just talking and passing resolutions, or terroristic activity. Both of these were set aside and terrorism was especially condemned as opposed to the basic policy of the Congress. A new technique of action was evolved which, though perfectly peaceful, yet implied non-submission to what was considered wrong and, as a consequence, a willing acceptance of the pain and suffering involved in this. Gandhi was an odd kind of pacifist, for he was an activist full of

dynamic energy. There was no submission in him to fate or anything that he considered evil; he was full of resistance, though this was peaceful and courteous.

The call of action was twofold. There was, of course, the action involved in challenging and resisting foreign rule; there was also the action which led us to fight our own social evils. Apart from the fundamental objective of the Congress—the freedom of India—and the method of peaceful action, the principal planks of the Congress were national unity, which involved the solution of the minority problems, and the raising of the depressed classes and the ending of the curse of untouchability.

Realizing that the main props of British rule were fear, prestige, the co-operation, willing or unwilling, of the people, and certain classes whose vested interests were centred in British rule, Gandhi attacked these foundations. Titles were to be given up and, though the title-holders responded to this only in small measure, the popular respect for these British-given titles disappeared and they became symbols of degradation. New standards and values were set up and the pomp and splendour of the Viceregal court and the Princes, which used to impress so much, suddenly appeared supremely ridiculous and vulgar and rather shameful, surrounded as they were by the poverty and misery of the people. Rich men were not so anxious to flaunt their riches; outwardly at least many of them adopted simpler ways and, in their dress, became almost indistinguishable from humbler folk.

The older leaders of the Congress, bred in a different and more quiescent tradition, did not take easily to these new ways and were disturbed by the upsurge of the masses. Yet so powerful was the wave of feeling and sentiment that swept through the country that some of this intoxication filled them also.

It is said, and I think with truth, that the Indian habit of mind is essentially one of quietism. Perhaps old races develop that attitude to life, a long tradition of philosophy also leads to it and yet Gandhi, a typical product of India, represents the very antithesis of quietism. He has been a demon of energy and action,

a hustler, and a man who not only drives himself but drives others. He has done more than anyone I know to fight and change the quietism of the Indian people.

He sent us to the villages, and the countryside hummed with the activity of innumerable messengers of the new gospel of action. The peasant was shaken up and he began to emerge from his quiescent shell. The effect on us was different but equally far-reaching, for we saw, for the first time as it were, the villager in the intimacy of his mud hut, and with the stark shadow of hunger always pursuing him. We learnt our Indian economics more from these visits than from books and learned discourses. The emotional experience we had already undergone was emphasized and confirmed and henceforward there could be no going back for us to our old life or our old standards, howsoever much our views might change subsequently.

Gandhi held strong views on economic, social, and other matters. He did not try to impose all of these on the Congress, though he continued to develop his ideas, and sometimes in the process varied them, through his writings. But some he tried to push into the Congress. He proceeded cautiously, for he wanted to carry the people with him. Sometimes he went too far for the Congress and had to retrace his steps. Not many accepted his views in their entirety; some disagreed with that fundamental outlook. But many accepted them in the modified form in which they came to the Congress as being suited to the circumstances then existing. In two respects the background of his thought had a vague but considerable influence: the fundamental test of everything was how far it benefited the masses, and the means were always important and could not be ignored even though the end in view was right, for the means governed the end and varied it.

Gandhi was essentially a man of religion, a Hindu to the innermost depths of his being, and yet his conception of religion had nothing to do with any dogma or custom or ritual. It was basically concerned with his firm belief in the moral law, which he calls the Law of Truth or Love. Truth and non-violence appear to him to be the same thing or different aspects of one

and the same thing, and he uses these words almost interchangeably. Claiming to understand the spirit of Hinduism, he rejects every text or practice which does not fit in with his idealist interpretation of what it should be, calling it an interpolation or a subsequent accretion. 'I decline to be a slave', he has said, 'to precedents or practice I cannot understand or defend on a moral basis.' And so in practice he is singularly free to take the path of his choice, to change and adapt himself, to develop his philosophy of life and action, subject only to the overriding consideration of the moral law as he conceives this to be. In politics, as in other aspects of life, this creates difficulties for the average person, and often misunderstanding. But no difficulty makes him swerve from the straight line of his choosing, though within limits he is continually adapting himself to a changing situation. Every reform that he suggests, every advice that he gives to others, he straightway applies to himself. He is always beginning with himself, and his words and actions fit into each other like a glove on the hand. And so, whatever happens, he never loses his integrity and there is always an organic completeness about his life and work. Even in his apparent failures he has seemed to grow in stature.

What was his idea of India which he was setting out to mould according to his own wishes and ideals? 'I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country, in whose making they have an effective voice, an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people, an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony. There can be no room in such an India for the curse of untouchability or the curse of intoxicating drinks and drugs. . . . Women will enjoy the same rights as men. . . . This is the India of my dreams.'[1] Proud of his Hindu inheritance as he was, he tried to give to Hinduism a kind of universal attire and included all religions within the fold of truth. He refused to narrow his cultural inheritance. 'Indian culture', he wrote, 'is neither Hindu, Islamic, nor any other, wholly. It is a fusion of all.'

[1] D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. III, p. 141.—Ed.

Again he said: 'I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I refuse to live in other peoples' houses as an interloper, a beggar, or a slave.'[1] Influenced by modern thought-currents, he never let go of his roots and clung to them tenaciously.

Even religion took second place to his passion to raise the masses. 'A semi-starved nation can have neither religion nor art nor organization.' 'Whatever can be useful to starving millions is beautiful to my mind. Let us give today first the vital things of life, and all the graces and ornaments of life will follow. . . . I want art and literature that can speak to millions.'[2] These unhappy dispossessed millions haunted him and everything seemed to revolve round them. 'For millions it is an eternal vigil or an eternal trance.' His ambition, he said, was 'to wipe every tear from every eye'.

It is not surprising that this astonishingly vital man, full of self-confidence and an unusual kind of power, standing for equality and freedom for each individual, but measuring all this in terms of the poorest, fascinated the masses of India and attracted them like a magnet. He seemed to them to link up the past with the future and to make the dismal present appear just as a stepping-stone to that future of life and hope. And not the masses only, but intellectuals and others also, though their minds were often troubled and confused and the change-over for them from the habits of a lifetime was more difficult. Thus he effected a vast psychological revolution not only among those who followed his lead but also among his opponents and those many neutrals who could not make up their minds what to think and what to do.

Congress was dominated by Gandhi and yet it was a peculiar domination, for the Congress was an active, rebellious, many-sided organization, full of variety of opinion, and not easily led this way or that. Often Gandhi toned down his position to meet the wishes of others, sometimes he accepted even an adverse decision.

[1] D. G. Tendulkar, *Gandhiji, His Life and Work* (1944), pp. 63-4.—Ed.

[2] D. G. Tendulkar, *Gandhiji, His Life and Work*, p. 69.—Ed.

Thus in 1920 the National Congress, and to a large extent the country, took this new and unexplored path (of Civil Disobedience) and came into conflict repeatedly with the British power. Civil disobedience struggles came one after the other, involving enormous suffering, but that suffering was self-invited and therefore strength-giving, not the kind which overwhelms the unwilling, leading to despair and defeatism.

10 : The Question of Minorities

During the second Civil Disobedience movement of 1930 the response from the Moslems was very considerable, though less than in 1920-23. Among those who were jailed in connexion with this movement there were at least 10,000 Moslems. The North-West Frontier Province, which is an almost entirely Moslem province (95 per cent), played a leading and remarkable part in this movement. This was largely due to the work and personality of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the unquestioned and beloved leader of the Pathans in this province. Of all the remarkable happenings in India in recent times, nothing is more astonishing than the way in which Abdul Ghaffar Khan made his turbulent and quarrelsome people accept peaceful methods of political action, involving enormous suffering. That suffering was indeed terrible and has left a trail of bitter memories; and yet their discipline and self-control were such that no act of violence was committed by the Pathans against the Government forces or others opposed to them. When it is remembered that a Pathan loves his gun more than his brother, is easily excited, and has long had a reputation for killing at the slightest provocation, this self-discipline appears little short of miraculous.

The communal problem, as it was called, was one of adjusting the claims of the minorities and giving them sufficient protection from majority action. Minorities in India, it must be remembered, are not racial or national minorities as in Europe; they are religious minorities. Racially India is a patchwork and a curious mixture,

but no racial questions have arisen or can arise in India. Religion transcends these racial differences, which fade into one another and are often hard to distinguish. Religious barriers are obviously not permanent, as conversions can take place from one religion to another, and a person changing his religion does not thereby lose his racial background or his cultural and linguistic inheritance. Latterly religion, in any real sense of the word, has played little part in Indian political conflicts, though the word is often enough used and exploited. Religious differences, as such, do not come in the way, for there is a great deal of mutual tolerance for them. In political matters, religion has been displaced by what is called communalism, a narrow group mentality basing itself on a religious community but in reality concerned with political power and patronage for the interested group.

There was no dispute about the usual provisions for minority protection, such as the League of Nations used to lay down. All those were agreed to and much more. Religion, culture, language, the fundamental rights of the individual and the group, were all to be protected and assured by basic constitutional provisions in a democratic constitution applying equally to all. Apart from this, the whole history of India was witness of the toleration and even encouragement of minorities and of different racial groups. There is nothing in Indian history to compare with the bitter religious feuds and persecutions that prevailed in Europe. So we did not have to go abroad for ideas of religious and cultural toleration; these were inherent in Indian life. In regard to individual and political rights and civil liberties, we were influenced by the ideas of the French and American revolutions, as also by the constitutional history of the British Parliament. Socialistic ideas, and the influence of the Soviet revolution, came in later to give a powerful economic turn to our thoughts.

The Congress made many mistakes, but these were in relatively minor questions of approach or tactics. It was obvious that even for purely political reasons the Congress was eager and anxious to bring about a communal solution and thus remove a barrier to progress.

There was no such eagerness in the purely communal organizations, for their chief reason for existence was to emphasize the particular demands of their respective groups, and this had led to a certain vested interest in the *status quo*. Though predominantly Hindu in membership, the Congress had large numbers of Moslems on its rolls, as well as all other religious groups like Sikhs, Christians, etc. It was thus forced to think in national terms. For it the dominating issue was national freedom and the establishment of an independent democratic state.

11 : The Congress develops a Foreign Policy

Gandhi gave a turn to our nationalist movement which lessened the feelings of frustration and bitterness. Those feelings continued, but I do not know of any other nationalist movement which has been so free from hatred. Gandhi was an intense nationalist; he was also, at the same time, a man who felt he had a message not only for India but for the world, and he ardently desired world peace. He had said: 'My idea of nationalism is that my country may become free, that if need be the whole of the country may die, so that the human race may live. There is no room for race hatred here. Let that be our nationalism.'[1] And again: 'I do want to think in terms of the whole world. My patriotism includes the good of mankind in general. Therefore, my service of India includes the service of humanity. . . . Isolated independence is not the goal of the world states. It is voluntary interdependence. The better mind of the world desires today not absolutely independent states, warring one against another, but a federation of friendly, interdependent states. The consummation of that event may be far off. I want to make no grand claim for our country. But I see nothing grand or impossible about our expressing our readiness for universal interdependence rather than independence. I desire the

[1] D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. II, p. 263.—Ed.

ability to be totally independent without asserting the independence.'[1]

It is surprising how internationally-minded we grew in spite of our intense nationalism. No other nationalist movement of a subject country came anywhere near this, and the general tendency in such other countries was to keep clear of international commitments. In India also there were those who objected to our lining up with republican Spain and China, Abyssinia and Czechoslovakia. Why antagonize powerful nations like Italy, Germany, and Japan ? they said ; every enemy of Britain should be treated as a friend ; idealism has no place in politics, which concerns itself with power and the opportune use of it. But these objectors were overwhelmed by the mass sentiment the Congress had created and hardly ever gave public expression to their views.

12 : Reaction to War

On September 14th, 1939, after long deliberation, the Congress Working Committee issued a lengthy statement on the war crisis. The steps the Viceroy had taken and the new enactments and decrees were referred to and it was stated that the Working Committee 'cannot agree to the carrying out by the Indian people of orders issued by external authority. Co-operation must be between equals by mutual consent for a cause which both consider to be worthy. The people of India have, in the recent past, faced grave risks and willingly made great sacrifices to secure their own freedom and establish a free democratic State in India, and their sympathy is entirely on the side of democracy and freedom. But India cannot associate herself in a war said to be for democratic freedom when that very freedom is denied to her, and such limited freedom as she possesses taken away from her.'

This statement, issued after anxious deliberation, was an attempt to overcome the barriers that had arisen

[1] D. G. Tendulkar, *Gandhiji, His Life and Work*, pp. 385-6.—Ed.

between India and England and poisoned their relations for a century and a half, to find some way to reconcile our eagerness to join in this world struggle with popular enthusiasm behind us, and our passionate desire for freedom.

The sudden change in the war situation, resulting in the invasion of Denmark and Norway, and a little later in the astonishing collapse of France, produced a profound impression. People's reactions naturally varied, but there was a powerful current of sympathy for France and for England immediately after Dunkirk and during the air blitz over England. Congress, which had been on the verge of civil disobedience, could not think in terms of any such movement while the very existence of free England hung in the balance. There were some people, of course, who thought that England's difficulty and peril were India's opportunity, but the leaders of the Congress were definitely opposed to any such advantage being taken of a situation full of disastrous foreboding for England, and declared so publicly. All talk of civil disobedience was given up for the time being.

But positive action became inevitable, for sometimes the only failure is in failing to act. That action could only be, in accordance with our established policy, in the nature of civil disobedience. Yet care was taken not to have any popular upheavals and civil disobedience was limited to chosen individuals. It was what is called individual civil disobedience as contrasted with the mass variety of it. It was really in the nature of a great moral protest. From a politician's point of view it seems odd that we should deliberately avoid any attempt to upset the administration and make it easy for it to put the trouble-makers in prison. That has not been the way of aggressive political action or revolution anywhere else. Yet that was Gandhi's way of combining morality with revolutionary politics, and he was always the inevitable leader when any such movement took place. It was his way of showing that while we refused to submit to British policy and showed our resentment and determination by voluntarily inviting suffering for ourselves, yet our object was not to create trouble.

This individual civil disobedience movement started

in a very small way, each person having to pass some kind of a test and get permission before he or she could take part in it. Those who were chosen broke some formal order, were arrested, and sentenced to imprisonment. As is usual with us, men at the top were chosen first—members of the Congress Executive, ex-ministers of Provincial Governments, members of the Legislatures, members of the All-India and Provincial Congress Committees. Gradually the circle grew till between twenty-five to thirty thousand men and women were in prison. These included the Speakers and a large number of members of our Provincial Legislative Assemblies, which had been suspended by the Government. Thus we demonstrated that if our elected assemblies were not allowed to function their members would not submit to autocratic rule and preferred prison to it.

In India tension grew in the early months of 1942. The theatre of war came ever nearer and there was now the probability of air raids over Indian cities. What was going to happen in those Eastern countries where war was raging ? What new development could take place in the relations between India and England ? Were we going to carry on in the old way, glaring at each other, tied up and separated by the bitter memories of past history, victims of a tragic fate which none could avert ? Or would common perils help us to bridge that chasm ? Even the bazaars woke up from their normal lethargy, a wave of excitement passed over them and they buzzed with all manners of rumours.

13 : Sir Stafford Cripps comes to India

After the fall of Singapore to the Japanese, Sir Stafford Cripps came to India with the proposals of the British War Cabinet, which dealt essentially with the future, and, while asserting the principle of self-determination, gave the right to Provinces or Indian States not to join the Indian Union. Any proposal to cut up India into parts was a painful one to contemplate ; it went against all those deeply-felt sentiments and convictions that move people so powerfully. The whole nationalist movement

of India had been based on India's unity, but the sentiment was older and deeper than the present phase of nationalism ; it went far back into the remote periods of Indian history.

Apart from sentiment, there were solid reasons against partition. The social and economic problems of India had reached a crisis, chiefly because of the policy of the British Government, which necessitated rapid and all-round progress if the gravest of disasters had to be averted. That progress could only take place with real and effective planning for the whole of India, for the various parts supplied each other's deficiencies.

And yet under stress of dire necessity or some compelling disaster one has to agree to many undesirable things. Circumstances may force a partition of what logically and normally must not be divided. But the proposals put forward on behalf of the British Government did not deal with any definite and particular partition of India. They opened out a vista of an indefinite number of partitions both of Provinces and States. The British proposals were rejected by the Congress, by the Moslem League and by every other political party.

Nevertheless, we could not remain silent and inert spectators of the tragedy that seemed to be imminent. We had to advise the people, the vast masses of the civilian population, as to what they should do in case of invasion. We told them that in spite of their indignation against British policy they must not interfere in any way with the operations of the British or allied armed forces, as this would be giving indirect aid to the enemy aggressor. Further, that they must on no account submit to the invader, or obey his orders, or accept any favours from him. If the invading forces sought to take possession of the people's homes and fields they must be resisted even unto death. This resistance was to be peaceful ; it was to be the completest form of non-co-operation with the enemy.

Much as I hated war, the prospect of a Japanese invasion of India had in no way frightened me. At the back of my mind I was in a sense attracted to this coming of war, horrible as it was, to India. For I wanted a tremendous shake-up, a personal experience

for millions of people which would drag them out of that peace of the grave that Britain had imposed upon us. Something that would force them to face the reality of today and to outgrow the past which filled their minds. Not to break with the past, and yet not to live in it; realize the present and look to the future. The cost of war was heavy and the consequences full of uncertainty. That war was not of our seeking, but since it had come, it could be made to harden the fibre of the nation and provide those vital experiences out of which a new life might blossom forth. Vast numbers would die, that was inevitable, but it is better to die in war than through famine; it is better to die than to live a miserable, hopeless life. Out of death, life is born afresh, and individuals and nations who do not know how to die, do not know also how to live. 'Only where there are graves are there resurrections.'

But though the war had come to India, it had brought no exhilaration of the spirit to us, no pouring out of our energies in some glad endeavour, when pain and death were forgotten and self itself ignored and only the cause of freedom counted and the vision of the future that lay beyond. Only the suffering and sorrow were for us, and an awareness of impending disaster, which sharpened our perceptions and quickened pain, and which we could not even help to avert. A brooding sense of inevitable and ineluctable tragedy grew upon us, a tragedy that was both personal and national.

This had nothing to do with victory or defeat in the war, with who won and who lost. We did not want the Axis Powers to win, for that led to certain disaster; we did not want the Japanese to enter or occupy any part of India. That had to be resisted anyhow and we repeatedly impressed the public with this fact, but all this was a negative approach. What positive aim was there in this war, what future would emerge out of it? Was it just a repetition of past follies and disasters, a play of nature's blind forces which took no cognizance of man's wishes and ideals? What was going to be the fate of India?

14 : The Challenge : Quit India Resolution

While this struggle was going on in India's mind and a feeling of desperation was growing, Gandhiji wrote a number of articles which suddenly gave a new direction to people's thoughts, or, as often happens, gave shape to their vague ideas. Inaction at that critical stage and submission to all that was happening had become intolerable to him. The only way to meet that situation was for Indian freedom to be recognized and for a free India to meet aggression and invasion in co-operation with the allied nations. If this recognition was not forthcoming then some action must be taken to challenge the existing system and wake up the people from the lethargy that was paralysing them and making them easy prey to every kind of aggression.

There was nothing new in this demand, for it was a repetition of what we had been saying all along, but there was a new urgency and passion in his speech and writing. And there was the hint of action. There was no doubt that he represented at the moment the prevailing sentiment in India.

On August 7th and 8th, 1942, in Bombay the All-India Congress Committee considered and debated in public the resolution, which has since come to be known as the 'Quit India Resolution'. That resolution was a long and comprehensive one, a reasoned argument for the immediate recognition of Indian freedom and the ending of British rule in India 'both for the sake of India and for the success of the cause of the United Nations'.

The Committee again appealed to Britain and the United Nations 'in the interest of world freedom'. But —and there came the sting of the resolution—'the Committee is no longer justified in holding the nation back from endeavouring to assert its will against an imperialist and authoritarian Government which dominates over it and prevents it from functioning in its own interest and in the interest of humanity. The Committee resolves therefore to sanction, for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and independence, the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines under

the inevitable leadership of Gandhiji.' That sanction was to take effect only when Gandhiji so decided. Finally, it was stated that the Committee had 'no intention of gaining power for the Congress. The power, when it comes, will belong to the whole people of India.'

The resolution was finally passed late in the evening of August 8th, 1942. A few hours later, in the early morning of August 9th, a large number of arrests were made in Bombay and all over the country. And so to Ahmadnagar Fort.

15 : Mass Upheavals and their Suppression

What happened in India in August, 1942, was no sudden development but a culmination of all that had gone before. Much has been written about it, in attack, criticism or defence, and many explanations given. And yet most of this writing misses the real meaning, for it applies purely political considerations to something that was deeper than politics. Behind it all lay an intense feeling that it was no longer possible to endure and live under foreign autocratic rule. All other questions became secondary—whether under that rule it was possible to make improvements or progress in some directions, or whether the consequences of a challenge might be more harmful still. Only the overwhelming desire to be rid of it and to pay any price for the riddance remained, only the feeling that whatever happened this could not be endured.

How many people out of India's millions felt this way ? It is impossible to say. For most of those millions all conscious feeling has been deadened by poverty and misery. Among the others were those who had been corrupted by office or privileges or vested interest, or whose minds had been diverted by special claims. Yet the feeling was very widespread, varying in intensity and sometimes overlaid by other feelings. There were many gradations in it, from an intensity of belief and a desire to brave all hazards, which led inevitably to action, to a vague sympathy from a safe distance. Some, tragically inclined, felt suffocated and strangled at the lack of air to breathe in the oppressive atmosphere

that surrounded them; others, living on the ordinary trivial plane, had more capacity to adapt themselves to conditions they disliked.

The sudden, unorganized demonstrations and outbreaks on the part of the people, culminating in violent conflicts and destruction, and continued against overwhelming and powerful armed forces, were a measure of the intensity of their feelings. Those feelings had been there even before the arrest of their leaders, but the arrests and the frequent firings that followed them roused the people to anger and to the only course that an enraged mob follows. For a time there seems to have been a sense of uncertainty as to what should be done. There was no direction, no programme. There was no well-known person to lead them or tell them what to do, and yet they were too excited and angry to remain quiescent. As often happens in these circumstances, local leaders sprang up and were followed for the moment. But even the guidance they gave was little; it was essentially a spontaneous mass upheaval.

Though the policy of non-violence went under, for the time being at least, the long training that the people had received under it had one important and desirable result. In spite of the passions aroused there was very little, if any, racial feeling, and, on the whole, there was a deliberate attempt on the part of the people to avoid causing bodily injury to their opponents. There was a great deal of destruction of communications and governmental property, but even in the midst of this destruction care was taken to avoid loss of life. This was not always possible or always attempted, especially in actual conflicts with the police or other armed forces. According to official reports, so far as I have been able to find them, about 100 persons were killed by mobs in the course of the disturbances all over India. This figure is very small considering the extent and area of the disturbances and the conflicts with the police.

But the greatest sufferers were the simple-hearted, poverty-stricken villagers of the rural areas. Suffering, for many generations, had been the badge of their tribe; they had even roused themselves to action; whether they had been foolish or mistaken or not, they had

proved their loyalty to the cause of Indian freedom. Their effort had failed, and the burden had fallen on their bent shoulders and broken bodies.

16 : India's Growth arrested

A nation, like an individual, has many personalities, many approaches to life. If there is a sufficiently strong organic bond between these different personalities, it is well; otherwise these personalities split up and lead to disintegration and trouble. Normally, there is a continuous process of adjustment going on and some kind of an equilibrium is established. If normal development is arrested, or sometimes if there is some rapid change which is not easily assimilated, then conflict arises between those different personalities. In the mind and spirit of India, below the surface of our superficial conflicts and divisions, there has been this fundamental conflict due to a long period of arrested growth. A society, if it is to be both stable and progressive, must have a certain more or less fixed foundation of principles as well as a dynamic outlook. Both appear to be necessary. Without the dynamic outlook there is stagnation and decay, without some fixed basis of principle there is likely to be disintegration and destruction.

In India from the earliest days there was a search for those basic principles, for the unchanging, the universal, the absolute. Yet the dynamic outlook was also present and an appreciation of life and the changing world. On these two foundations a stable and progressive society was built up, though the stress was always more on stability and security and the survival of the race. In later years the dynamic aspect began to fade away, and in the name of eternal principles the social structure was made rigid and unchanging. While the social system was rigid, no limit was placed on the freedom of the mind.

The very thing India lacked, the modern West possessed and possessed to excess. It had the dynamic outlook. It was engrossed in the changing world, caring little for ultimate principles, the

unchanging, the universal. It paid little attention to duties and obligations and emphasized rights. It was active, aggressive, acquisitive, seeking power and domination, living in the present and ignoring the future consequences of its actions. Because it was dynamic, it was progressive and full of life, but that life was a fevered one and the temperature kept on rising progressively.

If Indian civilization went to seed because it became static, self-absorbed and inclined to narcissism, the civilization of the modern West, with all its great and manifold achievements, does not appear to have been a conspicuous success or to have thus far solved the basic problems of life. Conflict is inherent in it and periodically it indulges in self-destruction on a colossal scale. It seems to lack something to give it stability, some basic principles to give meaning to life, though what these are I cannot say. Yet because it is dynamic and full of life and curiosity, there is hope for it.

India, as well as China, must learn from the West for the modern West has much to teach, and the spirit of the age is represented by the West. But the West is also obviously in need of learning much and its advances in technology will bring it little comfort if it does not learn some of the deeper lessons of life, which have absorbed the minds of thinkers in all ages and in all countries.

India has become static, and yet it would be utterly wrong to imagine that she was unchanging. No change at all means death. Her very survival as a highly evolved nation shows that there was some process of continuous adaptation going on. When the British came to India, though technologically somewhat backward, she was still among the advanced commercial nations of the world. Technical changes would undoubtedly have come and changed India as they had changed some Western countries. But her normal development was arrested by the British power.

17 : Religion, Philosophy and Science

India must break with much of her past and not allow it to dominate the present. Our lives are encumbered with the dead wood of this past; all that is dead and has served its purpose has to go. But that does not mean a break with, or a forgetting of, the vital and life-giving in that past. We can never forget the ideals that have moved our race, the dreams of the Indian people through the ages, the wisdom of the ancients, the buoyant energy and love of life and nature of our forefathers, their spirit of curiosity and mental adventure, the daring of their thought, their splendid achievements in literature, art and culture, their love of truth and beauty and freedom, the basic values that they set up, their understanding of life's mysterious ways, their toleration of other ways than theirs, their capacity to absorb other peoples and their cultural accomplishments, to synthesize them and develop a varied and mixed culture; nor can we forget the myriad experiences which have built up our ancient race and lie embedded in our subconscious minds. We will never forget them or cease to take pride in that noble heritage of ours. If India forgets them she will no longer remain India and much that has made her our joy and pride will cease to be.

It is not this that we have to break with, but all the dust and dirt of ages that have covered her up and hidden her inner beauty and significance, the excrescences and abortions that have twisted and petrified her spirit, set it in rigid frames, and stunted her growth. We have to cut away these excrescences and remember afresh the core of that ancient wisdom and adapt it to our present circumstances. We have to get out of traditional ways of thought and living which, for all the good they may have done in a past age, and there was much good in them, have ceased to have significance today. We have to make our own all the achievements of the human race and join up with others in the exciting adventure of Man, more exciting today perhaps than in earlier ages, realizing that this has ceas-

ed to be governed by national boundaries or old divisions and is common to the race of man everywhere. We have to revive the passion for truth and beauty and freedom which gives meaning to life, and develop afresh that dynamic outlook and spirit of adventure which distinguished those of our race who, in ages past, built our house on these strong and enduring foundations. Old as we are, with memories stretching back to the early dawns of human history and endeavour, we have to grow young again, in tune with our present time, with the irrepressible spirit and joy of youth in the present and its faith in the future.

Religion, though it has undoubtedly brought comfort to innumerable human beings and stabilized society by its values, has checked the tendency to change and progress inherent in human society.

Philosophy has avoided many of these pitfalls and encouraged thought and inquiry. But it has usually lived in its ivory tower cut off from life and its day-to-day problems, concentrating on ultimate purposes and failing to link them with the life of man. Logic and reason were its guides and they took it far in many directions, but that logic was too much the product of the mind and unconcerned with fact.

Science ignored the ultimate purposes and looked at fact alone. It made the world jump forward with a leap, built up a glittering civilization, opened up innumerable avenues for the growth of knowledge, and added to the power of man to such an extent that for the first time it was possible to conceive that man could triumph over and shape his physical environment. Man became almost a geological force, changing the face of the planet earth chemically, physically, and in many other ways. Yet when this sorry scheme of things entirely seemed to be in his grasp, to mould it nearer to the heart's desire, there was some essential lack and some vital element was missing. There was no knowledge of ultimate purposes and not even an understanding of the immediate purpose, for science had told us nothing about any purpose in life. Nor did man, so powerful in his control of nature, have the power to control himself, and the monster he had created ran

amok. Perhaps new developments in biology, psychology, and similar sciences, and the interpretation of biology and physics, may help man to understand and control himself more than he has done in the past. Or, before any such advances influence human life sufficiently, man may destroy the civilization he has built and have to start anew.

Science has dominated the Western world and everyone there pays tribute to it, and yet the West is still far from having developed the real temper of science. It has still to bring the spirit and the flesh into creative harmony. In India in many obvious ways we have a greater distance to travel. And yet there may be fewer major obstructions on our way, for the essential basis of Indian thought for ages past, though not its later manifestations, fits in with the scientific temper and approach, as well as with internationalism. It is based on a fearless search for truth, on the solidarity of man, even on the divinity of everything living, and on the free and co-operative development of the individual and the species, ever to greater freedom and higher stages of human growth.

18 : The Importance of the National Idea : Changes necessary in India

A blind reverence for the past is bad and so also is a contempt for it, for no future can be founded on either of these. The present and the future inevitably grow out of the past and bear its stamp, and to forget this is to build without foundations and to cut off the roots of national growth. It is to ignore one of the most powerful forces that influence people. Nationalism is essentially a group memory of past achievements, traditions, and experiences, and nationalism is stronger today than it has ever been. Many people thought that nationalism had had its day and must inevitably give place to the ever-growing international tendencies of the modern world. Socialism with its proletarian background derided national culture as something tied up with a decaying middle class. Capitalism itself became progres-

sively international with its cartels and combines, and overflowed national boundaries. Trade and commerce, easy communications and rapid transport, the radio and cinema, all helped to create an international atmosphere and to produce the delusion that nationalism was doomed.

New patterns must inevitably be adopted but they must be integrated with the old. Sometimes the new, though very different, appears in terms of pre-existing patterns, and thus creates a feeling of continuous development from the past, a link in the long chain of the history of the race. Indian history is a striking record of changes introduced in this way, a continuous adaptation of old ideas to a changing environment, of old patterns to new. Because of this there is no sense of cultural break in it and there is that continuity, in spite of repeated change, from the far distant days of Mohenjodaro to our own age. There was a reverence for the past and for traditional forms, but there was also a freedom and flexibility of the mind and a tolerance of the spirit. So while forms often remained, the inner content continued to change. In no other way could that society have survived for thousands of years. Only a living and growing mind could overcome the rigidity of traditional forms, only those forms could give it continuity and stability.

Yet this balance may become precarious and one aspect may overshadow, and to some extent, suppress this other. In India there was an extraordinary freedom of the mind allied to certain rigid social forms. These forms ultimately influenced the freedom of the mind and made it in practice, if not in theory, more rigid and limited. In Western Europe there was no such freedom of the mind and there was also much less rigidity in social forms. Europe had a long struggle for the freedom of the mind and, as a consequence, social forms also changed.

The bitter conflict between science and religion which shook up Europe in the nineteenth century would have no reality in India, nor would change based on the applications of science bring any conflict with those ideals. Undoubtedly such changes would stir up, as they are

stirring up, the mind of India, but instead of combating them or rejecting them it would rationalize them from its own ideological point of view and fit them into its mental framework.

Our approach to knowledge in the past was a synthetic one, but limited to India. That limitation continued and the synthetic approach gave place gradually to a more analytical one. We have now to lay greater stress on the synthetic aspect and make the whole world our field of study. This emphasis on synthesis is indeed necessary for every nation and individual if they are to grow out of the narrow grooves of thought and action in which most people have lived for so long. The development of science and its applications have made this possible for us, and yet the very excess of new knowledge has added to its difficulty. Specialization has led to a narrowing of individual life in a particular groove, and man's labour in industry is often confined to some infinitesimal part of the whole product. Specialization in knowledge and work will have to continue, but it seems more essential than ever that a synthetic view of human life and man's adventure through the ages should be encouraged. This view will have to take into consideration the past and the present, and include in its scope all countries and peoples. In this way perhaps we might develop, in addition to our own national backgrounds and culture, an appreciation of others and a capacity to understand and co-operate with the peoples of other countries. Thus also we might succeed to some extent in building up integrated personalities instead of the lop-sided individuals of today. We might become, in Plato's words, 'spectators of all time and all being', drawing sustenance from the rich treasures that humanity has accumulated, adding to them, and applying them in building for the future.

This new point of view is especially needed by those peoples who live a fevered life in the present only and have almost forgotten the past. But for countries like India a different emphasis is necessary, for we have too much of the past about us and have ignored the present. We have to get rid of that narrowing religious outlook, that obsession with supernatural and metaphysical

speculations, that loosening of the mind's discipline in religious ceremonial and mystical emotionalism, which come in the way of our understanding ourselves and the world. We have to come to grips with the present, this life, this world, this nature which surrounds us in its infinite variety. Some Hindus talk of going back to the Vedas; some Moslems dream of an Islamic theocracy. Idle fancies, for there is no going back to the past; there is no turning back even if this was thought desirable. There is only one-way traffic in Time.

India must therefore lessen her religiosity and turn to science. She must get rid of the exclusiveness in thought and social habit which has become like a prison to her, stunting her spirit and preventing growth. The idea of ceremonial purity has erected barriers against social intercourse and narrowed the sphere of social action. The day-to-day religion of the orthodox Hindu is more concerned with what to eat and what not to eat, who to eat with and from whom to keep away, than with spiritual values. The rules and regulations of the kitchen dominate his social life.

The spirit of the age is in favour of equality, though practice denies it almost everywhere. Yet the spirit of the age will triumph. In India, at any rate, we must aim at equality. That does not and cannot mean that everybody is physically or intellectually or spiritually equal or can be made so. But it does mean equal opportunities for all and no political, economic, or social barrier in the way of any individual or group. It means a faith in humanity and a belief that there is no race or group that cannot advance and make good in its own way, given the chance to do so. It means a realization of the fact that the backwardness or degradation of any group is not due to inherent failings in it, but principally to lack of opportunities and long suppression by other groups. It should mean an understanding of the modern world wherein real progress and advance, whether national or international, have become very much a joint affair and a backward group pulls back others. Therefore, not only must equal opportunities be given to all, but special opportunities for educational, economic, and cultural growth must be given to backward groups

so as to enable them to catch up with those who are ahead of them. Any such attempt to open the doors of opportunity to all in India will release enormous energy and ability and transform the country with amazing speed.

The Indian people, freed from the terrible sense of oppression and frustration, will grow in stature again and lose their narrow nationalism and exclusiveness. Proud of their Indian heritage, they will open their minds and hearts to other peoples and other nations, and become citizens of this wide and fascinating world, marching onwards with others in that ancient quest in which their forefathers were the pioneers.

19 : India : Strong National State or Centre of Super-National State ?

The problems of the moment seem big and engross our attention. And yet, in a longer perspective, they may have no great importance and, under the surface of superficial events, more vital forces may be at work. Forgetting present problems then for a while and looking ahead, India emerges as a strong united state, a federation of free units, intimately connected with her neighbours and playing an important part in world affairs. She is one of the very few countries which have the resources and capacity to stand on their own feet.

The Pacific is likely to take the place of the Atlantic in the future as a nerve centre of the world. Though not directly a Pacific state, India will inevitably exercise an important influence there. India will also develop as the centre of economic and political activity in the Indian Ocean area, in South-East Asia and right up to the Middle East. Her position gives her an economic and strategic importance in a part of the world which is going to develop rapidly in the future. If there is a regional grouping of the countries bordering on the Indian Ocean on either side of India—Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, India, Ceylon, Burma, Malaya, Siam, Java, etc., present-day minority problems will disappear, or at

any rate will have to be considered in an entirely different context.

Whatever happens it will be well for the world if India can make her influence felt. For that influence will always be in favour of peace and co-operation and against aggression.

20 : The Modern Approach to an Old Problem

We have therefore to function in line with the highest ideals of the age we live in, though we may add to them or seek to mould them in accordance with our national genius. Those ideals may be classed under two heads : humanism and the scientific spirit. Between these two there has been an apparent conflict but the great upheaval of thought today, with its questioning of all values, is removing the old boundaries between these two approaches, as well as between the external world of science and the internal world of introspection. There is a growing synthesis between humanism and the scientific spirit, resulting in a kind of scientific humanism.

Einstein, most eminent among scientists, tells us that 'the fate of the human race was more than ever dependent on its moral strength today. The way to a joyful and happy state is through renunciation and self-limitation everywhere.' He takes us back suddenly from this proud age of science to the old philosophers, from the lust for power and the profit motive to the spirit of renunciation with which India has been familiar. Probably most other scientists of today will not agree with him in this or when he says : 'I am absolutely convinced that no wealth in the world can help humanity forward, even in the hands of the most devoted workers in the cause. The example of great and pure characters is the only thing that can produce fine ideas or noble deeds. Money only appeals to selfishness and always tempts its owners irresistibly to abuse it.'

Today, in the world of politics and economics there is a search for power, and yet when power is attained much else of value has gone. Political trickery and intrigue

take the place of idealism, and cowardice and selfishness the place of disinterested courage. Form prevails over substance, and power, so eagerly sought after, somehow fails to achieve what it aimed at. For power has its limitations, and force recoils on itself. Neither can control the spirit, though they may harden and coarsen it. 'You can rob an army of its general,' says Confucius, 'but not the least of men of his will.'

John Stuart Mill wrote in his Autobiography: 'I am now convinced that no great improvements in the lot of mankind are possible, until a great change takes place in the fundamental constitution of their modes of thought.'[1]

India and China, as well as other nations, evolved their own ways of life and gave them an enduring foundation. They imagined, and many among them vainly imagine still, that their way is the only way. Today, Europe and America have evolved their own way of life, which is dominant in the world, and which, their people imagine, is the only way. But probably none of these ways is the one and only desirable way and each may learn something from the other. Certainly India and China must learn a great deal, for they had become static and the West not only represents the spirit of the age but is dynamic and changing and has the capacity for growth in it, even though this functions through self-destruction and periodical human sacrifice.

21 : *Epilogue*

Nearly five months have gone by since I took to this writing and I have covered a thousand hand-written pages with this jumble of ideas in my mind. For five months I have travelled in the past and peeped into the future and sometimes tried to balance myself on that 'point of intersection of the timeless with time'. These months have been full of happenings in the world and the war has advanced rapidly towards a triumphant conclusion, so far as military victories go. In my own

[1] World's Classics edition, p. 202.—Ed.

country also much has happened of which I could be only a distant spectator, and waves of unhappiness have sometimes temporarily swept over me and passed on. Because of this business of thinking and trying to give some expression to my thoughts, I have drawn myself away from the piercing edge of the present and moved along the wider expanses of the past and the future.

But there must be an end to this wandering. If there was no other sufficient reason for it, there is a very practical consideration which cannot be ignored. I have almost exhausted the supply of paper that I had managed to secure after considerable difficulty and it is not easy to get more of it.

The discovery of India—what have I discovered ? It was presumptuous of me to imagine that I could unveil her and find out what she is today and what she was in the long past. Today she is four hundred million separate individual men and women, each differing from the other, each living in a private universe of thought and feeling. If this is so in the present, how much more difficult is it to grasp that multitudinous past of innumerable successions of human beings ! Yet something has bound them together and binds them still. India is a geographical and economic entity, a cultural unity amidst diversity, a bundle of contradictions held together by strong but invisible threads. Overwhelmed again and again, her spirit was never conquered, and today when she appears to be the plaything of a proud conqueror, she remains unsubdued and unconquered. About her there is the elusive quality of a legend of long ago ; some enchantment seems to have held her mind. She is a myth and an idea, a dream and a vision, and yet very real and present and pervasive. There are terrifying glimpses of dark corridors which seem to lead back to primeval night, but also there is the fullness and warmth of the day about her. Shameful and repellent she is occasionally, perverse and obstinate, sometimes even a little hysterical, this lady with a past. But she is very lovable, and none of her children can forget her wherever they go or whatever strange fate befalls them. For she is part of them in her greatness as well as her failings, and they are mirrored in those

deep eyes of hers that have seen so much of life's passion and joy and folly, and looked down into wisdom's well. Each one of them is drawn to her, though perhaps each has a different reason for that attraction or can point to no reason at all, and each sees some different aspect of her many-sided personality. From age to age she has produced great men and women, carrying on the old tradition and yet ever adapting it to changing times. Rabindranath Tagore, in line with that great succession, was full of the temper and urges of the modern age and yet was rooted in India's past, and in his own self built up a synthesis of the old and the new. 'I love India,' he said, 'not because I cultivate the idolatry of geography, not because I have had the chance to be born on her soil, but because she has saved through tumultuous ages the living words that have issued from the illuminated consciousness of her great ones.' So many will say, while others will explain their love for her in some different way.

The old enchantment seems to be breaking today and she is looking around and waking up to the present. But however she changes, as change she must, that old witchery will continue and hold the hearts of her people. Though her attire may change, she will continue as of old, and her store of wisdom will help her to hold on to what is true and beautiful and good in this harsh, vindictive, and grasping world.

The world of today has achieved much, but for all its declared love for humanity, it has based itself far more on hatred and violence than on the virtues that make man human. War is the negation of truth and humanity. War may be unavoidable sometimes, but its progeny are terrible to contemplate. Not mere killing, for man must die, but the deliberate and persistent propagation of hatred and falsehood, which gradually become the normal habits of the people. It is dangerous and harmful to be guided in our life's course by hatreds and aversions, for they are wasteful of energy and limit and twist the mind and prevent it from perceiving the truth.

India will find herself again when freedom opens out new horizons, and the future will then fascinate her

far more than the immediate past of frustration and humiliation. She will go forward with confidence, rooted in herself and yet eager to learn from others and co-operate with them. Today she swings between a blind adherence to her old customs and a slavish imitation of foreign ways. In neither of these can she find relief or life or growth. It is obvious that she has to come out of her shell and take full part in the life and activities of the modern age. It should be equally obvious that there can be no real cultural or spiritual growth based on imitation. Such imitation can only be confined to a small number which cuts itself off from the masses and the springs of national life. True culture derives its inspiration from every corner of the world, but it is home-grown and has to be based on the wide mass of the people. Art and literature remain lifeless if they are continually thinking of foreign models. The day of a narrow culture confined to a small fastidious group is past. We have to think in terms of the people generally, and their culture must be a continuation and development of past trends, and must also represent their new urges and creative tendencies.

Emerson, over a hundred years ago, warned his countrymen in America not to imitate or depend too much culturally on Europe. A new people as they were, he wanted them not to look back on their European past but to draw inspiration from the abounding life of their new country. 'Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close. The millions that around us are rushing into life cannot always be fed on the sere remains of foreign harvests. Events, actions arise, that must be sung, that will sing themselves . . . there are creative manners, there are creative actions and creative words . . . that is, indicative of no custom or authority, but springing, spontaneous from the mind's own sense of good and fair.' And again in his essay on 'Self-Reliance': 'It is for want of self-culture that the superstition of travelling, whose idols are Italy, England, Egypt, retains its fascination for all educated Americans. They who made England, Italy, or Greece venerable in the imagination did so not by rambling round creation as a moth round a

lamp but by sticking fast where they were, like an axis of the earth. In manly hours we feel that duty is our place. . . . The soul is no traveller : the wise man stays at home with his soul . . . and when his necessities, his duties, on any occasion call him from his house, or into foreign lands, he is at home still, . . . and shall make men sensible by the expression of his countenance that he goes as the missionary of wisdom and virtue, and visits cities and men like a sovereign and not like an interloper or a valet.'

'I have no churlish objection,' continues Emerson, 'to the circumnavigation of the globe, for the purposes of art, of study, and benevolence, so that man is first domesticated, or does not go abroad with the hope of finding somewhat greater than he knows. He who travels to be amused, or to get somewhat which he does not carry, travels away from himself, and grows old even in youth among old things. In Thebes, in Palmyra, his will and mind have become old and dilapidated as they. He carries ruins to ruins.

'But the rage of travelling is itself only a symptom of a deeper unsoundness affecting the whole intellectual action. . . . We imitate . . . Our houses are built with foreign taste ; our shelves are garnished with foreign ornaments ; our opinions, our tastes, our faculties, lean on and follow the past and the distant. The Soul created the arts wherever they have flourished. It was in his own mind that the artist sought his model. It was an application of his own thought to the thing to be done and the conditions to be observed. . . . Insist on yourself ; never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation ; but of the adopted talent of another you have only an extemporaneous half-possession.'

We in India do not have to go abroad in search of the Past and the Distant. We have them here in abundance. If we go to foreign countries it is in search of the Present. That search is necessary, for isolation from it means backwardness and decay. The world of Emerson's time has changed and old barriers are breaking down ; life becomes more international. We have to play our part in this coming internationalism and, for this purpose, to

travel, to meet others, learn from them and understand them. But a real internationalism is not something in the air without roots or anchorage. It has to grow out of national cultures and can only flourish today on a basis of freedom and equality and true internationalism. Nevertheless Emerson's warning holds today as it did in the past, and our search can only be fruitful in the conditions mentioned by him. Not to go anywhere as interlopers, but only if we are welcomed as equals and as comrades in a common quest. We are citizens of no mean country and we are proud of the land of our birth, of our people, our culture and traditions. That pride should not be for a romanticized past to which we have to cling; nor should it encourage exclusiveness or a want of appreciation of other ways than ours. It must never allow us to forget our many weaknesses and failings or blunt our longing to be rid of them. We have a long way to go and much leeway to make up before we can take our proper station with others in the van of human civilization and progress. And we have to hurry, for the time at our disposal is limited and the pace of the world grows ever swifter. It was India's way in the past to welcome and absorb other cultures. That is much more necessary today, for we march to the One World of tomorrow where national cultures will be intermingled with the international culture of the human race. We shall therefore seek wisdom and knowledge and friendship and comradeship wherever we can find them, and co-operate with others in common tasks, but we are no suppliants for others' favours and patronage. Thus we shall remain true Indians and Asiatics, and become at the same time good internationalists and world citizens.

My generation has been a troubled one in India and the world. We may carry on for a little while longer, but our day will be over and we shall give place to others, and they will live their lives and carry their burdens to the next stage of the journey. How have we played our part in this brief interlude that draws to a close? I do not know. Others of a later age will judge. By what standards do we measure success or failure? That too I do not know. We can make no

complaint that life has treated us harshly, for ours has been a willing choice, and perhaps life has not been so bad to us after all. For only they can sense life who stand often on the verge of it, only they whose lives are not governed by the fear of death. In spite of all the mistakes that we may have made, we have saved ourselves from triviality and an inner shame and cowardice. That, for our individual selves, has been some achievement. 'Man's dearest possession is life, and since it is given to him to live but once, he must so live as not to be seared with the shame of a cowardly and trivial past, so live as not to be tortured for years without purpose, so live that dying he can say: "All my life and my strength were given to the first cause of the world—the liberation of mankind".'[1]

[1] Attributed to Lenin; but see Ostrovsky (N.): *How the Steel Was Tempered*, Vol. II, p. 105 (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1952).

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